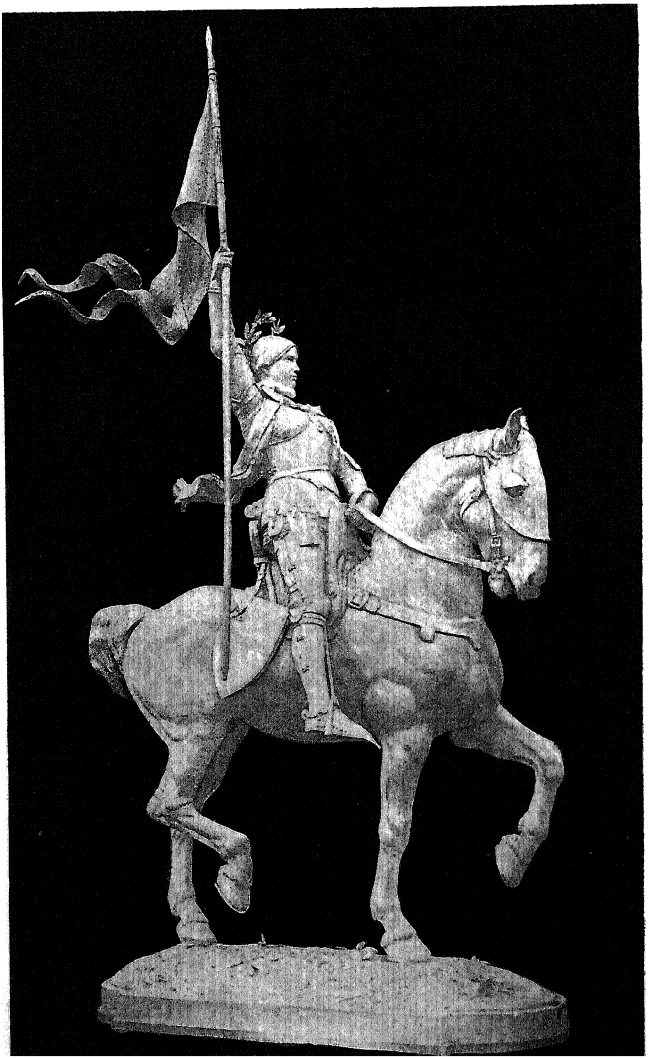

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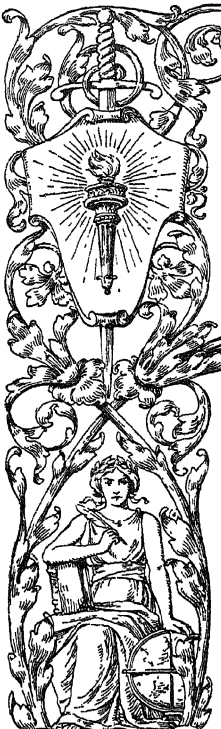
BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.



BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY

BY JOHN LORD, LL.D.

THE WORLD'S HEROES AND MASTER MINDS



NEW YORK
JAMES CLARKE & COMPANY

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

By JOHN LORD, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ROMAN WORLD," "MODERN EUROPE," ETC., ETC.

VOLUME VII.

GREAT WOMEN.

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VOL. VII.

GREAT WOMEN.

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HÉLOÏSE.

LOVE.

A. D. 1101–1162.

BEACON LIGHTS.

HÉLOÏSE.

LOVE.

WHEN Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, they yet found one flower, wherever they wandered, blooming in perpetual beauty. This flower represents a great certitude, without which few would be happy, — subtile, mysterious, inexplicable, — a great boon recognized alike by poets and moralists, Pagan and Christian; yea, identified not only with happiness, but human existence, and pertaining to the soul in its highest aspirations. Allied with the transient and the mortal, even with the weak and corrupt, it is yet immortal in its nature and lofty in its aims, — at once a passion, a sentiment, and an inspiration.

To attempt to describe woman without this element of our complex nature, which constitutes her peculiar fascination, is like trying to act the tragedy of Hamlet without Hamlet himself, — an absurdity; a picture without a central figure, a novel without a heroine, a religion without a sacrifice. My subject is not with-

out its difficulties. The passion or sentiment I describe is degrading when perverted, as it is exalting when pure. Yet it is not vice I would paint, but virtue; not weakness, but strength; not the transient, but the permanent; not the mortal, but the immortal, — all that is ennobling in the aspiring soul.

"Socrates," says Legouvé, "who caught glimpses of everything that he did not clearly define, uttered one day to his disciples these beautiful words: 'There are two Venuses: one celestial, called Urania, the heavenly, who presides over all pure and spiritual affections; and the other Polyhymnia, the terrestrial, who excites sensual and gross desires.'" The history of love is the eternal struggle between these two divinities, — the one seeking to elevate and the other to degrade. Plato, for the first time, in his beautiful hymn to the Venus Urania, displayed to men the unknown image of love, — the educator and the moralist, — so that grateful ages have consecrated it by his name. Centuries rolled away, and among the descendants of Teutonic barbarians a still lovelier and more ideal sentiment burst out from the lips of the Christian Dante, kindled by the adoration of his departed Beatrice. And as she courses from star to star, explaining to him the mysteries, the transported poet exclaims: —

"Ah, all the tongues which the Muses have inspired could not tell the thousandth part of the beauty of the smile of

Beatrice as she presented me to the celestial group, exclaiming, 'Thou art redeemed!' O woman, in whom lives all my hope, who hast deigned to leave for my salvation thy footsteps on the throne of the Eternal, thou hast redeemed me from slavery to liberty; now earth has no more dangers for me. I cherish the image of thy purity in my bosom, that in my last hour, acceptable in thine eyes, my soul may leave my body."

Thus did Dante impersonate the worship of Venus Urania, — spiritual tenderness overcoming sensual desire. Thus faithful to the traditions of this great poet did the austere Michael Angelo do reverence to the virtues of Vittoria Colonna. Thus did the lofty Corneille present in his Pauline a divine model of the love which inspires great deeds and accompanies great virtues. Thus did Shakspeare, in his portrait of Portia, show the blended generosity and simplicity of a woman's soul: —

> "For you [my Lord Bassanio]
> I would be trebled twenty times myself;
> A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;"

or, in his still more beautiful delineation of Juliet, paint an absorbing devotion: —

> "My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
> The more I have, for both are infinite."

Thus did Milton, in his transcendent epic, show how

a Paradise was regained when woman gave her generous sympathy to man, and reproduced for all coming ages the image of Spiritual Love, — the inamorata of Dante and Petrarch, the inspired and consoling guide.

But the muse of the poets, even when sanctified by Christianity, never sang such an immortal love as the Middle Ages in sober prose have handed down in the history of Héloïse, — the struggle between the two Venuses of Socrates, and the final victory of Urania, though not till after the temporary triumph of Polyhymnia, — the inamorata of earth clad in the vestments of a sanctified recluse, and purified by the chastisements of Heaven. "Saint Theresa dies longing to join her divine spouse; but Saint Theresa is only a Héloïse looking towards heaven." Héloïse has an earthly idol; but her devotion has in it all the elements of a supernatural fervor, — the crucifixion of self in the glory of him she adored. He was not worthy of her idolatry; but she thought that he was. Admiration for genius exalted sentiment into adoration, and imagination invested the object of love with qualities superhuman.

Nations do not spontaneously keep alive the memory of those who have disgraced them. It is their heroes and heroines whose praises they sing, — those only who have shone in the radiance of genius and virtue. They forget defects, if these are counterbalanced by grand

services or great deeds,—if their sons and daughters have shed lustre on the land which gave them birth. But no lustre survives egotism or vice; it only lasts when it gilds a noble life. There is no glory in the name of Jezebel, or Cleopatra, or Catherine de Medicis, brilliant and fascinating as were those queens; but there is glory in the memory of Héloïse. There is no woman in French history of whom the nation is prouder; revered, in spite of early follies, by the most austere and venerated saints of her beclouded age, and hallowed by the tributes of succeeding centuries for those sentiments which the fires of passion were scarcely able to tarnish, for an exalted soul which eclipsed the brightness of uncommon intellectual faculties, for a depth of sympathy and affection which have become embalmed in the heart of the world, and for a living piety which blazes all the more conspicuously from the sins which she expiated by such bitter combats. She was human in her impulses, but divine in her graces; one of those characters for whom we cannot help feeling the deepest sympathy and the profoundest admiration,—a character that has its contradictions, like that warrior-bard who was after God's own heart, in spite of his crimes, because his soul thirsted for the beatitudes of heaven, and was bound in loving loyalty to his Maker, against whom he occasionally sinned by force of mortal passions, but whom he never ignored

or forgot, and against whom he never persistently rebelled.

As a semi-warlike but religious age produced a David, with his strikingly double nature perpetually at war with itself and looking for aid to God, — his "sun," his "shield," his hope, and joy, — so an equally unenlightened but devout age produced a Héloïse, the impersonation of sympathy, disinterestedness, suffering, forgiveness, and resignation. I have already described this dark, sad, turbulent, superstitious, ignorant period of strife and suffering, yet not without its poetic charms and religious aspirations; when the convent and the castle were its chief external features, and when a life of meditation was as marked as a life of bodily activity, as if old age and youth were battling for supremacy, — a very peculiar state of society, in which we see the loftiest speculations of the intellect and the highest triumphs of faith blended with puerile enterprises and misdirected physical forces.

In this semi-barbaric age Héloise was born, about the year 1101. Nobody knew who was her father, although it was surmised that he belonged to the illustrious family of the Montmorencies, which traced an unbroken lineage to Pharimond, before the time of Clovis. She lived with her uncle Fulbert, an ignorant, worldly-wise old canon of the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame in Paris. He called her his niece; but

whether niece, or daughter, or adopted child, was a mystery. She was of extraordinary beauty, though remarkable for expression rather than for regularity of feature. In intellect she was precocious and brilliant; but the qualities of a great soul shone above the radiance of her wit. She was bright, amiable, affectionate, and sympathetic, — the type of an interesting woman. The ecclesiastic was justly proud of her, and gave to her all the education the age afforded. Although not meaning to be a nun, she was educated in a neighboring convent, — for convents, even in those times, were female seminaries, containing many inmates who never intended to take the veil. But the convent then, as since, was a living grave to all who took its vows, and was hated by brilliant women who were not religious. The convent necessarily and logically, according to the theology of the Middle Ages, was a retreat from the world, — a cell of expiation; and yet it was the only place where a woman could be educated.

Héloïse, it would seem, made extraordinary attainments, and spoke Latin as well as her native tongue. She won universal admiration, and in due time, at the age of eighteen, returned to her uncle's house, on the banks of the Seine, on the island called the Cité, where the majestic cathedral and the castle of the king towered above the rude houses of the people. Adjoining the church were the cloisters of the monks and the

Episcopal School, the infant university of Paris, over which the Archdeacon of Paris, William of Champeaux, presided in scholastic dignity and pride, — next to the bishop the most influential man in Paris. The teachers of this school, or masters and doctors as they were called, and the priests of the cathedral formed the intellectual aristocracy of the city, and they were frequent visitors at the house of Fulbert the canon. His niece, as she was presumed to be, was the great object of attraction. There never was a time when intellectual Frenchmen have not bowed down to cultivated women. Héloïse, though only a girl, was a queen of such society as existed in the city, albeit more admired by men than women, — poetical, imaginative, witty, ready, frank, with a singular appreciation of intellectual excellence, dazzled by literary fame, and looking up to those brilliant men who worshipped her.

In truth, Héloïse was a prodigy. She was vastly superior to the men who surrounded her, most of whom were pedants, or sophists, or bigots; dignitaries indeed, but men who exalted the accidental and the external over the real and the permanent; men who were fond of quibbles and sophistries, jealous of each other and of their own reputation, dogmatic and positive as priests are apt to be, and most positive on points which either are of no consequence or cannot be solved. The soul of Héloïse panted for a greater intellectual freedom and a

deeper sympathy than these priests could give. She pined in society. She was isolated by her own superiority, — superior not merely in the radiance of the soul, but in the treasures of the mind. Nor could her companions comprehend her greatness, even while they were fascinated by her presence. She dazzled them by her personal beauty perhaps more than by her wit; for even mediæval priests could admire an expansive brow, a deep blue eye, *doux et penétrant*, a mouth varying with unconscious sarcasms, teeth strong and regular, a neck long and flexible, and shoulders sloping and gracefully moulded, over which fell ample and golden locks; while the attitude, the complexion, the blush, the thrilling accent, and the gracious smile, languor, and passion depicted on a face both pale and animated, seduced the imagination and commanded homage. Venus Polyhymnia stood confessed in all her charms, for the time triumphant over that Venus Urania who made the convent of the Paraclete in after times a blessed comforter to all who sought its consolations.

Among the distinguished visitors at the house of her uncle the canon, attracted by her beauty and accomplishments, was a man thirty-eight years of age, of noble birth, but by profession an ecclesiastic; whose large forehead, fiery eye, proud air, plain, negligent dress, and aristocratic manners, by turns affable and haughty, stamped him as an extraordinary man. The people in

the streets stopped to gaze at him as he passed, or rushed to the doors and windows for a glimpse; for he was as famous for genius and learning as he was distinguished by manners and aspect. He was the eldest son of a Breton nobleman, who had abandoned his inheritance and birthright for the fascinations of literature and philosophy. His name was Peter Abélard, on the whole the most brilliant and interesting man whom the Middle Ages produced, — not so profound as Anselm, or learned as Peter Lombard, or logical as Thomas Aquinas, or acute as Albertus Magnus, but the most eloquent expounder of philosophy of whom I have read. He made the dullest subjects interesting; he clothed the dry bones of metaphysics with flesh and blood; he invested the most abstruse speculations with life and charm; he filled the minds of old men with envy, and of young men with admiration; he thrilled admirers with his wit, sarcasm, and ridicule, — a sort of Galileo, mocking yet amusing, with a superlative contempt of dulness and pretension. He early devoted himself to dialectics, to all the arts of intellectual gladiatorship, to all the sports of logical tournaments which were held in such value by the awakened spirits of the new civilization.

Such was Abélard's precocious ability, even as a youth, that no champion could be found to refute him in the whole of Brittany. He went from castle

to castle, and convent to convent, a philosophical knight-errant, seeking intellectual adventures; more intent, however, on *éclat* and conquest than on the establishment of the dogmas which had ruled the Church since Saint Augustine. He was a born logician, as Bossuet was a born priest, loving to dispute as much as the Bishop of Meaux loved to preach; not a serious man, but a bright man, ready, keen, acute, turning fools into ridicule, and pushing acknowledged doctrines into absurdity; not to bring out the truth as Socrates did, or furnish a sure foundation of knowledge, but to revolutionize and overturn. His spirit was like that of Lucien, — desiring to demolish, without substituting anything for the dogmas he had made ridiculous. Consequently he was mistrusted by the old oracles of the schools, and detested by conservative churchmen who had intellect enough to see the tendency of his speculations. In proportion to the hatred of orthodox ecclesiastics like Anselme of Laon and Saint Bernard, was the admiration of young men and of the infant universities. Nothing embarrassed him. He sought a reason for all things. He appealed to reason rather than authority, yet made the common mistake of the scholastics in supposing that metaphysics could explain everything. He doubtless kindled a spirit of inquiry, while he sapped the foundation of Christianity and undermined faith. He was a nominalist; that is, he denied

the existence of all eternal ideas, such as Plato and the early Fathers advocated. He is said to have even adduced the opinions of Pagan philosophers to prove the mysteries of revelation. He did not deny revelation, nor authority, nor the prevailing doctrines which the Church indorsed and defended; but the tendency of his teachings was to undermine what had previously been received by faith. He exalted reason, therefore, as higher than faith. His spirit was offensive to conservative teachers. Had he lived in our times, he would have belonged to the most progressive schools of thought and inquiry, — probably a rationalist, denying what he could not prove by reason, and scorning all supernaturalism; a philosopher of the school of Hume, or Strauss, or Renan. And yet, after assailing everything venerable, and turning his old teachers into ridicule, and creating a spirit of rationalistic inquiry among the young students of divinity, who adored him, Abélard settled back on authority in his old age, perhaps alarmed and shocked at the mischief he had done in his more brilliant years.

This exceedingly interesting man, with all his vanity, conceit, and arrogance, had turned his steps to Paris, the centre of all intellectual life in France, after he had achieved a great provincial reputation. He was then only twenty, a bright and daring youth, conscious of his powers, and burning with ambition. He was not

ambitious of ecclesiastical preferment, for aristocratic dunces occupied the great sees and ruled the great monasteries. He was simply ambitious of influence over students in philosophy and religion, — fond of *éclat* and fame as a teacher. The universities were not then established; there were no chairs for professors, nor even were there scholastic titles, like those of doctor and master; but Paris was full of students, disgusted with the provincial schools. The Cathedral School of Paris was the great attraction to these young men, then presided over by William of Champeaux, a very respectable theologian, but not a remarkable genius like Aquinas and Bonaventura, who did not arise until the Dominican and Franciscan orders were established to combat heresy. Abélard, being still a youth, attended the lectures of this old theologian, who was a Realist, not an original thinker, but enjoying a great reputation, which he was most anxious to preserve. The youthful prodigy at first was greatly admired by the veteran teacher; but Abélard soon began to question him and argue with him. Admiration was then succeeded by jealousy. Some sided with the venerable teacher, but more with the flippant yet brilliant youth who turned his master's teachings into ridicule, and aspired to be a teacher himself. But as teaching was under the supervision of the school of Notre Dame, Paris was interdicted to him; he was not allowed to combat the

received doctrines which were taught in the Cathedral School. So he retired to Melun, about thirty miles from Paris, and set up for a teacher and lecturer on philosophy. All the influence of William of Champeaux and his friends was exerted to prevent Abélard from teaching, but in vain. His lecture-room was crowded. The most astonishing success attended his lectures. Not contented with the *éclat* he received, he now meditated the discomfiture of his old master. He removed still nearer to Paris. And so great was his success and fame, that it is said he compelled William to renounce his Realism and also his chair, and accept a distant bishopric. William was conquered by a mere stripling; but that stripling could have overthrown a Goliath of controversy, not with a sling, but with a giant's sword.

Abélard having won a great dialectical victory, which brought as much fame as military laurels on the battle-field, established himself at St. Geneviève, just outside the walls of Paris, where the Pantheon now stands, which is still the centre of the Latin quarter, and the residence of students. He now applied himself to the study of divinity, and attended the lectures of Anselm of Laon. This celebrated ecclesiastic, though not so famous or able as Anselm of Canterbury, was treated by Abélard with the same arrogance and flippancy as he had bestowed on William of Champeaux. "I fre-

quented," said the young mocker, "the old man's school, but soon discovered that all his power was in length of practice. You would have thought he was kindling a fire, when instantly the whole house was filled with smoke, in which not a single spark was visible. He was a tree covered with thick foliage, which to the distant eye had charms, but on near inspection there was no fruit to be found; a fig-tree such as our Lord did curse; an oak such as Lucan compared Pompey to, — *Stat magni nominis umbra.*"

What a comment on the very philosophy which Abélard himself taught! What better description of the scholasticism of the Middle Ages! But original and brilliant as was the genius of Abélard, he no more could have anticipated the new method which Bacon taught than could Thomas Aquinas. All the various schools of the mediæval dialecticians, Realists and Nominalists alike, sought to establish old theories, not to discover new truth. They could not go beyond their assumptions. So far as their assumptions were true, they rendered great service by their inexorable logic in defending them. They did not establish premises; that was not their concern or mission. Assuming that the sun revolved around the earth, all their astronomical speculations were worthless, even as the assumption of the old doctrine of atoms in our times has led scientists to the wildest conclusions. The meta-

physics of the Schoolmen, whether they were sceptical or reverential, simply sharpened the intellectual faculties without advancing knowledge.

Abélard belonged by nature to the sceptical school. He delighted in negations, and in the work of demolition. So far as he demolished or ridiculed error he rendered the same service as Voltaire did: he prepared the way for a more inquiring spirit. He was also more liberal than his opponents. His spirit was progressive, but his method was faulty. Like all those who have sought to undermine the old systems of thought, he was naturally vain and conceited. He supposed he had accomplished more than he really had. He became bold in his speculations, and undertook to explain subjects beyond his grasp. Thus he professed to unfold the meaning of the prophecies of Ezekiel. He was arrogant in his claims to genius. "It is not by long study," said he, "that I have mastered the heights of science, but by the force of my mind." This flippancy, accompanied by wit and eloquence, fascinated young men. His auditors were charmed. "The first philosopher," they said, "had become the first divine." New pupils crowded his lecture-room, and he united lectures on philosophy with lectures on divinity. "Theology and philosophy encircled his brow with a double garland." So popular was he, that students came from Germany and Italy and England to hear his lectures.

The number of his pupils, it is said, was more than five thousand; and these included the brightest intellects of the age, among whom one was destined to be a pope (the great Innocent III.), nineteen to be cardinals, and one hundred to be bishops. What a proud position for a young man! What an astonishing success for that age! And his pupils were as generous as they were enthusiastic. They filled his pockets with gold; they hung upon his lips with rapture; they extolled his genius wherever they went; they carried his picture from court to court, from castle to castle, and convent to convent; they begged for a lock of his hair, for a shred of his garment. Never was seen before such idolatry of genius, such unbounded admiration for eloquence; for he stood apart and different from all other lights, — pre-eminent as a teacher of philosophy. "He reigned," says Lamartine, "by eloquence over the spirit of youth, by beauty over the regard of women, by love-songs which penetrated all hearts, by musical melodies repeated by every mouth. Let us imagine in a single man the first orator, the first philosopher, the first poet, the first musician of the age, — Cicero, Plato, Petrarch, Schubert, — all united in one living celebrity, and we can form some idea of his attractions and fame at this period of his life."

Such was that brilliant but unsound man, with learning, fame, personal beauty, fascinating eloquence,

dialectical acumen, aristocratic manners, and transcendent wit, who encountered at thirty-eight the most beautiful, gracious, accomplished, generous, and ardent woman that adorned that time, — only eighteen, thirsting for knowledge, craving for sympathy, and intensely idolatrous of intellectual excellence. But one result could be anticipated from such a meeting: they became passionately enamored of each other. In order to secure a more uninterrupted intercourse, Abélard sought and obtained a residence in the house of Fulbert, under pretence of desiring to superintend the education of his niece. The ambitious, vain, unsuspecting priest was delighted to receive so great a man, whose fame filled the world. He intrusted Héloïse to his care, with permission to use blows if they were necessary to make her diligent and obedient!

And what young woman with such a nature and under such circumstances could resist the influence of such a teacher? I need not dwell on the familiar story, how mutual admiration was followed by mutual friendship, and friendship was succeeded by mutual infatuation, and the gradual abandonment of both to a mad passion, forgetful alike of fame and duty.

"It became tedious," said Abélard, "to go to my lessons. I gave my lectures with negligence. I spoke only from habit and memory. I was only a reciter of ancient inventions; and if I chanced to compose verses,

they were songs of love, not secrets of philosophy." The absence of his mind evinced how powerfully his new passion moved his fiery and impatient soul. "He consumed his time in writing verses to the canon's niece; and even as Hercules in the gay court of Omphale threw down his club in order to hold the distaff, so Abélard laid aside his sceptre as a monarch of the schools to sing sonnets at the feet of Héloïse." And she also, still more unwisely, in the mighty potency of an absorbing love, yielded up her honor and her pride. This mutual infatuation was, it would seem, a gradual transition from the innocent pleasure of delightful companionship to the guilt of unrestrained desire. It was not premeditated design, — not calculation, but insidious dalliance: —

> "Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,
> When love approached me under friendship's name.
> Guiltless I gazed; heaven listened when you sung,
> And truths divine came mended from your tongue.
> From lips like those, what precept failed to move?
> Too soon they taught me 't was no sin to love."

In a healthy state of society this mutual passion would have been followed by the marriage ties. The parties were equal in culture and social position. And Abélard probably enjoyed a large income from the fees of students, and could well support the expenses of a family. All that was needed was the consecration of

emotions, which are natural and irresistible,—a mystery perhaps but ordained, and without which marriage would be mere calculation and negotiation. Passion, doubtless, is blind; but in this very blindness we see the hand of the Creator,—to baffle selfishness and pride. What would become of our world if men and women were left to choose their partners with the eye of unclouded reason? Expediency would soon make a desert of earth, and there would be no paradise found for those who are unattractive or in adverse circumstances. Friendship might possibly bring people together; but friendship exists only between equals and people of congenial tastes. Love brings together also those who are unequal. It joins the rich to the poor, the strong to the weak, the fortunate to the unfortunate, and thus defeats the calculations which otherwise would enter into matrimonial life. Without the blindness of passionate love the darts of Cupid would be sent in vain; and the helpless and neglected — as so many are — would stand but little chance for that happiness which is associated with the institution of marriage. The world would be filled with old bachelors and old maids, and population would hopelessly decline among virtuous people.

No scandal would have resulted from the ardent loves of Abélard and Héloïse had they been united by that sacred relation which was ordained in the garden

of Eden. "If any woman," says Legouvé, "may stand as the model of a wife in all her glory, it is Héloise. Passion without bounds and without alloy, enthusiasm for the genius of Abélard, jealous care for his reputation, a vigorous intellect, learning sufficient to join in his labors, and an unsullied name."

But those false, sophistical ideas which early entered into monastic life, and which perverted the Christianity of the Middle Ages, presented a powerful barrier against the instincts of nature and the ordinances of God. Celibacy was accounted as a supernal virtue, and the marriage of a priest was deemed a lasting disgrace. It obscured his fame, his prospects, his position, and his influence; it consigned him to ridicule and reproach. He was supposed to be married only to the Church, and would be unfaithful to Heaven if he bound himself by connubial ties. Says Saint Jerome, "Take axe in hand and hew up by the roots the sterile tree of marriage. God permits it, I grant; but Christ and Mary consecrated virginity." Alas, what could be hoped when the Church endorsed such absurd doctrines! Hildebrand, when he denounced the marriage of priests, made war on the most sacred instincts of human nature. He may have strengthened the papal domination, but he weakened the restraints of home. Only a dark and beclouded age could have upheld such a policy. Upon the Church of the Middle Ages we lay the blame of

these false ideas. She is in a measure responsible for the follies of Abélard and Héloise. They were not greater than the ideas of their age. Had Abélard been as bold in denouncing the stupid custom of the Church in this respect as he was in fighting the monks of St. Denis or the intellectual intolerance of Bernard, he would not have fallen in the respect of good people. But he was a slave to interest and conventionality. He could not brave the sneers of priests or the opinions of society; he dared not lose caste with those who ruled the Church; he would not give up his chances of preferment. He was unwilling either to renounce his love, or to avow it by an honorable, open union.

At last his intimacy created scandal. In the eyes of the schools and of the Church he had sacrificed philosophy and fame to a second Delilah. And Héloise was even more affected by his humiliation than himself. She more than he was opposed to marriage, knowing that this would doom him to neglect and reproach. Abélard would perhaps have consented to an open marriage had Héloise been willing; but with a strange perversity she refused. His reputation and interests were dearer to her than was her own fair name. She sacrificed herself to his fame; she blinded herself to the greatest mistake a woman could make. The excess of her love made her insensible to the principles of an immutable morality. Circumstances palliated her

course, but did not excuse it. The fatal consequences of her folly pursued her into the immensity of subsequent grief; and though afterwards she was assured of peace and forgiveness in the depths of her repentance, the demon of infatuated love was not easily exorcised. She may have been unconscious of degradation in the boundless spirit of self-sacrifice which she was willing to make for the object of her devotion, but she lost both dignity and fame. She entreated him who was now quoted as a reproach to human weakness, since the languor of passion had weakened his power and his eloquence, to sacrifice her to his fame; "to permit her no longer to adore him as a divinity who accepts the homage of his worshippers; to love her no longer, if this love diminished his reputation; to reduce her even, if necessary, to the condition of a woman despised by the world, since the glory of his love would more than compensate for the contempt of the universe."

"What reproaches," said she, "should I merit from the Church and the schools of philosophy, were I to draw from them their brightest star! And shall a woman dare to take to herself that man whom Nature meant to be the ornament and benefactor of the human race? Then reflect on the nature of matrimony, with its littleness and cares. How inconsistent it is with the dignity of a wise man! Saint Paul earnestly dissuades from it. So do the saints. So do the

philosophers of ancient times. Think a while. What a ridiculous association, — the philosopher and the chambermaids, writing-desks and cradles, books and distaffs, pens and spindles! Intent on speculation when the truths of nature and revelation are breaking on your eye, will you hear the sudden cry of children, the lullaby of nurses, the turbulent bustling of disorderly servants? In the serious pursuits of wisdom there is no time to be lost. Believe me, as well withdraw totally from literature as attempt to proceed in the midst of worldly avocations. Science admits no participation in the cares of life. Remember the feats of Xantippe. Take counsel from the example of Socrates, who has been set up as a beacon for all coming time to warn philosophers from the fatal rock of matrimony."

Such was the blended truth, irony, and wit with which Héloïse dissuaded Abélard from open marriage. He compromised the affair, and contented himself with a secret marriage. "After a night spent in prayer," said he, "in one of the churches of Paris, on the following morning we received the nuptial blessing in the presence of the uncle of Héloïse and of a few mutual friends. We then retired without observation, that this union, known only to God and a few intimates, should bring neither shame nor prejudice to my renown." A cold and selfish act, such as we might expect in Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon, — yet, nevertheless, the feeble concession which pride and policy



After the drawing by Gleyre

HELOÏSE

make to virtue, the triumph of expediency over all heroic and manly qualities. Like Maintenon, Héloïse was willing to seem what she was not, — only to be explained on the ground that concubinage was a less evil, in the eyes of the Church, than marriage in a priest.

But even a secret marriage was attended with great embarrassment. The news of it leaks out through the servants. The envious detractors of Abélard rejoice in his weakness and his humiliation. His pride now takes offence, and he denies the ties; and so does Héloïse. The old uncle is enraged and indignant. Abélard, justly fearing his resentment, — yea, being cruelly maltreated at his instigation, — removes his wife to the convent where she was educated, and induces her to take the veil. She obeys him; she obeys him in all things; she has no will but his. She thinks of nothing but his reputation and interest; she forgets herself entirely, yet not without bitter anguish. She accepts the sacrifice, but it costs her infinite pangs. She is separated from her husband forever. Nor was the convent agreeable to her. It was dull, monotonous, dismal; imprisonment in a tomb, a living death, where none could know her agonies but God; where she could not even hear from him who was her life.

Yet immolation in the dreary convent, where for nearly forty years she combated the recollection of her

folly, was perhaps the best thing for her. It was a cruel necessity. In the convent she was at least safe from molestation; she had every opportunity for study and meditation; she was free from the temptations of the world, and removed from its scandals and reproach. The world was crucified to her; Christ was now her spouse.

To a convent also Abélard retired, overwhelmed with shame and penitence. At St. Denis he assumed the strictest habits, mortified his body with severe austerities, and renewed with ardor his studies in philosophy and theology. He was not without mental sufferings, but he could bury his grief in his ambition. It would seem that a marked change now took place in the character of Abélard. He was less vain and conceited, and sought more eagerly the consolations of religion. His life became too austere for his brother monks, and they compelled him to leave this aristocratic abbey. He then resumed his lectures in the wilderness. He retreated to a desert place in Champagne, where he constructed a small oratory with his own hands. But still students gathered around him. They, too, constructed cells, like ancient anchorites, and cultivated the fields for bread. Then, as their numbers increased, they erected a vast edifice of stone and timber, which Abélard dedicated to the Holy Comforter, and called the Paraclete. It was here that his best days were

spent. His renewed labors and his intellectual boldness increased the admiration of his pupils. It became almost idolatry. It is said that three thousand students assembled at the Paraclete to hear him lecture. What admiration for genius, when three thousand young men could give up the delights of Paris for a wilderness with Abélard! What marvellous powers of fascination he must have had!

This renewed success, in the midst of disgrace, created immeasurable envy. Moreover, the sarcasms, boldness, and new views of the philosopher raised a storm of hatred. Galileo was not more offensive to the pedants and priests of his generation than Abélard was to the Schoolmen and monks of his day. They impeached both his piety and theology. He was stigmatized as unsound and superficial. Yet he continued his attacks, his ridicule, and his sarcasms. In proportion to the animosities of his foes was the zeal of his followers, who admired his boldness and arrogance. At last a great clamor was raised against the daring theologian. Saint Bernard, the most influential and profound ecclesiastic of the day, headed the opposition. He maintained that the foundations of Christianity were assailed. Even Abélard could not stand before the indignation and hostility of such a saint, — a man who kindled crusades, who made popes, who controlled the opinions of the age. Abélard was obliged to fly, and

sought an asylum amid the rocks and sands of Brittany. The Duke of this wild province gave him the abbey of St. Gildas; but its inmates were ignorant and disorderly, and added insubordination to dissoluteness. They ornamented their convent with the trophies of the chase. They thought more of bears and wild boars and stags than they did of hymns and meditations. The new abbot, now a grave and religious man, in spite of his opposition to the leaders of the orthodox party, endeavored to reform the monks, — a hopeless task, — and they turned against him with more ferocity than the theologians. They even poisoned, it is said, the sacramental wine. He was obliged to hide among the rocks to save his life. Nothing but aid from the neighboring barons saved him from assassination.

Thus fifteen years were passed in alternate study, glory, suffering, and shame. In his misery Abélard called on God for help, — his first great advance in that piety which detractors depreciated. He wrote also to a friend a history of his misfortunes. By accident this history fell into the hands of Héloïse, then abbess of the Paraclete, which Abélard had given her, and where she was greatly revered for all those virtues most esteemed in her age. It opened her wound afresh, and she wrote a letter to her husband such as has seldom been equalled for pathos and depth of sentiment. It is an immortal record of her grief, her unsubdued passion,

her boundless love, not without gentle reproaches for what seemed a cold neglect and silence for fifteen long and bitter years, yet breathing forgiveness, admiration, affection. The salutation of that letter is remarkable: "Héloise to her lord, to her father, to her husband, to her brother: his servant, — yes, his daughter; his wife, — yes, his sister." Thus does she begin that tender and long letter, in which she describes her sufferings, her unchanged affections, her ardent wishes for his welfare, revealing in every line not merely genius and sensibility, but a lofty and magnanimous soul. She glories in what constitutes the real superiority of her old lover; she describes with simplicity what had originally charmed her, — his songs and conversation. She professes still an unbounded obedience to his will, and begs for a reply, if for nothing else that she may be stimulated to a higher life amid the asperities of her gloomy convent.

> "Yet write, oh, write all, that I may join
> Grief to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine!
> Years still are mine, and these I need not spare,
> Love but demands what else were shed in prayer;
> No happier task these faded eyes pursue, —
> To read and weep is all I now can do."

Abélard replies to this touching letter coldly, but religiously, calling her his "sister in Christ," but not attempting to draw out the earthly love which both

had sought to crush. He implores her prayers in his behalf. The only sign of his former love is a request to be buried in her abbey, in anticipation of a speedy and violent death. Most critics condemn this letter as heartless; yet it is but charitable to suppose that he did not wish to trifle with a love so great, and reopen a wound so deep and sacred. All his efforts now seem to have been directed to raise her soul to heaven. But his letter does not satisfy her, and she again gives vent to her passionate grief in view of the separation: —

"O inclement Clemency! O unfortunate Fortune! She has so far consumed her weakness upon me that she has nothing left for others against whom she rages. I am the most miserable of the miserable, the most unhappy of the unhappy!"

This letter seems to have touched Abélard, and he replied to it more at length, and with great sympathy, giving her encouragement and consolation. He speaks of their mutual sufferings as providential; and his letter is couched in a more Christian spirit than one would naturally impute to him in view of his contests with the orthodox leaders of the Church; and it also expresses more tenderness than can be reconciled with the selfish man he is usually represented. He writes: —

"See, dearest, how with the strong nets of his mercy God has taken us from the depths of a perilous sea. Observe how

he has tempered mercy with justice; compare our danger with the deliverance, our disease with the remedy. I merit death, and God gives me life. Come, and join me in proclaiming how much the Lord has done for us. Be my inseparable companion in an act of grace, since you have participated with me in the fault and the pardon. Take courage, my dear sister; whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth. Sympathize with Him who suffered for your redemption. Approach in spirit His sepulchre. Be thou His spouse."

Then he closes with this prayer:—

"When it pleased Thee, O Lord, and as it pleased Thee, Thou didst join us, and Thou didst separate us. Now, what Thou hast so mercifully begun, mercifully complete; and after separating us in this world, join us together eternally in heaven."

No one can read this letter without acknowledging its delicacy and its loftiness. All his desires centred in the spiritual good of her whom the Church would not allow him to call any longer his wife, yet to whom he hoped to be reunited in heaven. As a professed nun she could no longer, with propriety, think of him as an earthly husband. For a priest to acknowledge a nun for his wife would have been a great scandal. By all the laws of the Church and the age they were now only brother and sister in Christ. Nothing escaped

from his pen which derogates from the austere dignity of the priest.

But Héloise was more human and less conventional. She had not conquered her love; once given, it could not be taken back. She accepted her dreary immolation in the convent, since she obeyed Abélard both as husband and as a spiritual father; but she would have left the convent and rejoined him had he demanded it, for marriage was to her more sacred than the veil. She was more emancipated from the ideas of her superstitious age than even the bold and rationalistic philosopher. With all her moral and spiritual elevation, Héloise could not conquer her love. And, as a wedded wife, why should she conquer it? She was both nun and wife. If fault there was, it was as wife, in immuring herself in a convent and denying the marriage. It should have been openly avowed; the denial of it placed her in a false position, as a fallen woman. Yet, as a fallen woman, she regained her position in the eyes of the world. She was a lady abbess. It was impossible for a woman to enjoy a higher position than the control of a convent. As abbess, she enjoyed the friendship and respect of some of the saintliest and greatest characters of the age, even of such a man as Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny. And it is impossible that she should have won the friendship of such a man, if she herself had not been irreproachable

in her own character. The error in judging Héloïse is, that she, as nun, had no right to love. But the love existed long before she took the veil, and was consecrated by marriage, even though private. By the mediæval and conventional stand-point, it is true, the wife was lost in the nun. That is the view that Abélard took, — that it was a sin to love his wife any longer. But Héloïse felt that it was no sin to love him who was her life. She continued to live in him who ruled over her, and to whose desire her will was subject and obedient, according to that eternal law declared in the garden of Eden.

Nor could this have been otherwise so long as Abélard retained the admiration of Héloïse, and was worthy of her devotion. We cannot tell what changes may have taken place in her soul had he been grovelling, or tyrannical, a slave of degrading habits, or had he treated her with cruel harshness, or ceased to sympathize with her sorrows, or transferred his affections to another object. But whatever love he had to give, he gave to her to the end, so far as the ideas of his age would permit. His fault was in making a nun of his wife, which was in the eyes of the world a virtual repudiation; even though, from a principle of sublime obedience and self-sacrifice, she consented to the separation. Was Josephine to blame because she loved a selfish man after she was repudiated? Héloïse was

simply unable to conquer a powerful love. It was not converted into hatred, because Abélard, in her eyes, seemed still to be worthy of it. She regarded him as a saint, forced by the ideas of his age to crush a mortal love, — which she herself could not do, because it was a sentiment, and sentiment is eternal. She was greater than Abélard, because her love was more permanent; in other words, because her soul was greater. In intellect he may have been superior to her, but not in the higher qualities which imply generosity, self-abnegation, and sympathy, — qualities which are usually stronger in women than in men. In Abélard the lower faculties — ambition, desire of knowledge, vanity — consumed the greater. *He* could be contented with the gratification of these, even as men of a still lower type can renounce intellectual pleasures for the sensual. It does not follow that Héloïse was weaker than he because she could not live outside the world of sentiment, but rather loftier and nobler. These higher faculties constituted her superiority to Abélard. It was sentiment which made her so pre-eminently great, and it was this which really endeared her to Abélard. By reason and will he ruled over her; but by the force of superior sentiment she ruled over him.

Sentiment, indeed, underlies everything that is great or lovely or enduring on this earth. It is the joy of festivals, the animating soul of patriotism, the bond

of families, the beauty of religious, political, and social institutions. It has consecrated Thermopylæ, the Parthenon, the Capitol, the laurel crown, the conqueror's triumphal procession, the epics of Homer, the eloquence of Demosthenes, the muse of Virgil, the mediæval cathedral, the town-halls of Flanders, the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, the struggles of the Puritans, the deeds of Gustavus Adolphus, the Marseilles hymn, the farewell address of Washington. There is no poetry without it, nor heroism, nor social banqueting. What is Christmas without the sentiments which hallow the evergreen, the anthem, the mistletoe, the family reunion? What is even tangible roast-beef and plum-pudding without a party to enjoy them; and what is the life of the party but the interchange of sentiments? Why is a cold sleigh-ride, or the ascent of a mountain, or a voyage across the Atlantic, or a rough journey under torrid suns to the consecrated places, — why are these endurable, and even pleasant? It is because the sentiments which prompt them are full of sweet and noble inspiration. The Last Supper, and Bethany, and the Sepulchre are immortal, because they testify eternal love. Leonidas lives in the heart of the world because he sacrificed himself to patriotism. The martyrs are objects of unfading veneration, because they died for Christianity.

In the same way Héloïse is embalmed in the affec-

tions of all nations because she gave up everything for an exalted sentiment which so possessed her soul that neither scorn, nor pity, nor ascetic severities, nor gloomy isolation, nor ingratitude, nor a living death could eradicate or weaken it, — an unbounded charity which covered with its veil the evils she could not remove. That all-pervading and all-conquering sentiment was the admiration of ideal virtues and beauties which her rapt and excited soul saw in her adored lover; such as Dante saw in his departed Beatrice. It was unbounded admiration for Abélard which first called out the love of Héloïse; and his undoubted brilliancy and greatness were exaggerated in her loving eyes by her imagination, even as mothers see in children traits that are hidden from all other mortal eyes. So lofty and godlike did he seem, amidst the plaudits of the schools, and his triumph over all the dignitaries that sought to humble him; so interesting was he to her by his wit, sarcasm, and eloquence, — that she worshipped him, and deemed it the most exalted honor to possess exclusively his love in return, which he gave certainly to no one else. Satisfied that he, the greatest man of the world, — as he seemed and as she was told he was, — should give to her what she gave to him, she exulted in it as her highest glory. It was all in all to her; but not to him. See, then, how superior Héloïse was to Abélard in humility as well as self-abnegation.

She was his equal, and yet she ever gloried in his superiority. See how much greater, too, she was in lofty sentiments, since it was the majesty of his mind and soul which she adored. He was comparatively indifferent to her when she became no longer an object of desire; but not so with her, since she was attracted by his real or supposed greatness of intellect, which gave permanence to her love, and loftiness also. He was her idol, since he possessed those qualities which most powerfully excited her admiration.

This then is love, when judged by a lofty standard, — worship of what is most glorious in mind and soul. And this exalted love is most common among the female sex, since their passions are weaker and their sentiments are stronger than those of most men. What a fool a man is to weaken this sympathy, or destroy this homage, or outrage this indulgence; or withhold that tenderness, that delicate attention, that toleration of foibles, that sweet appreciation, by which the soul of woman is kept alive and the lamp of her incense burning! And woe be to him who drives this confiding idolater back upon her technical obligations! The form that holds these certitudes of the soul may lose all its beauty by rudeness or neglect. And even if the form remains, what is a mortal body without the immortal soul which animates it? The glory of a man or of a woman is the real presence of spiritual love,

which brings peace to homes, alleviation to burdens, consolation to sufferings, rest to labors, hope to anxieties, and a sublime repose amid the changes of the world, — that blessed flower of perennial sweetness and beauty which Adam in his despair bore away from Eden, and which alone almost compensated him for the loss of Paradise.

It is not my object to present Abélard except in his connection with the immortal love with which he inspired the greatest woman of the age. And yet I cannot conclude this sketch without taking a parting glance of this brilliant but unfortunate man. And I confess that his closing days strongly touch my sympathies, and make me feel that historians have been too harsh in their verdicts. Historians have based their opinions on the hostilities which theological controversies produced, and on the neglect which Abélard seemed to show for the noble woman who obeyed and adored him. But he appears to have employed his leisure and tranquil days in writing hymns to the abbess of the Paraclete, in preparing homilies, and in giving her such advice as her circumstances required. All his later letters show the utmost tenderness and zeal for the spiritual good of the woman to whom he hoped to be reunited in heaven, and doing for Héloïse what Jerome did for Paula, and Fénelon for Madame Guyon.

If no longer her lover, he was at least her friend. An moreover, at this time he evinced a loftier religiou life than he has the credit of possessing. He live a life of study and meditation.

But his enemies would not allow him to rest, eve in generous labors. They wished to punish him an destroy his influence. So they summoned him to a ecclesiastical council to answer for his heresies. A first he resolved to defend himself, and Bernard, h greatest enemy, even professed a reluctance to conten with his superior in dialectical contests. But Abélar seeing how inflamed were the passions of the the logians against him, and how vain would be hi defence, appealed at once to the Pope; and Rome, c course, sided with his enemies. He was condemne to perpetual silence, and his books were ordered to b burned.

To this sentence it would appear that Abélard pr pared to submit with more humility than was to b expected from so bold and arrogant a man. But h knew he could not resist an authority based on gene ally accepted ideas any easier than Henry IV. coul have resisted Hildebrand. He made up his mind t obey the supreme authority of the Church, but bitterl felt the humiliation and the wrong.

Broken in spirit and in reputation, Abélard, now a old man, set out on foot for Rome to plead his caus

before the Pope. He stopped on his way at Cluny in Burgundy, that famous monastery where Hildebrand himself had ruled, now, however, presided over by Peter the Venerable, — the most benignant and charitable ecclesiastical dignitary of that age. And as Abélard approached the gates of the venerable abbey, which was the pride of the age, worn out with fatigue and misfortune, he threw himself at the feet of the lordly abbot and invoked shelter and protection. How touching is the pride of greatness, when brought low by penitence or grief, like that of Theodosius at the feet of Ambrose, or Henry II. at the tomb of Becket! But Peter raises him up, receives him in his arms, opens to him his heart and the hospitalities of his convent, not as a repentant prodigal, but as the greatest genius of his age, brought low by religious persecution. Peter did all in his power to console his visitor, and even privately interceded with the Pope, remembering only Abélard's greatness and his misfortunes. And the persecuted philosopher, through the kind offices of the abbot, was left in peace, and was even reconciled with Bernard, — an impossibility without altered opinions in Abélard, or a submission to the Church which bore all the marks of piety.

The few remaining days of this extraordinary man, it seems, were spent in study, penitence, and holy meditation. So beloved and revered was he by the

community among whom he dwelt, that for six centuries his name was handed down from father to son among the people of the valley and town of Cluny. "At the extremity of a retired valley," says Lamartine, "flanked by the walls of the convent, on the margin of extensive meadows, closed by woods, and near to a neighboring stream, there exists an enormous lime-tree, under the shade of which Abélard in his closing days was accustomed to sit and meditate, with his face turned towards the Paraclete which he had built, and where Héloïse still discharged the duties of abbess."

But even this pensive pleasure was not long permitted him. He was worn out with sorrows and misfortunes; and in a few months after he had crossed the hospitable threshold of Cluny he died in the arms of his admiring friend. "Under the instinct of a sentiment as sacred as religion itself, Peter felt that Abélard above and Héloïse on earth demanded of him the last consolation of a reunion in the grave. So, quietly, in the dead of night, dreading scandal, yet true to his impulses, without a hand to assist or an eye to witness, he exhumed the coffin which had been buried in the abbey cemetery, and conveyed it himself to the Paraclete, and intrusted it to Héloïse."

She received it with tears, shut herself up in the cold vault with the mortal remains of him she had loved so

well; while Peter, that aged saint of consolation, pronounced the burial service with mingled tears and sobs. And after having performed this last sad office, and given his affectionate benediction to the great woman to whom he was drawn by ties of admiration and sympathy, this venerable dignitary wended his way silently back to Cluny, and, for the greater consolation of Héloïse, penned the following remarkable letter, which may perhaps modify our judgment of Abélard: —

"It is no easy task, my sister, to describe in a few lines the holiness, the humility, and the self-denial which our departed brother exhibited to us, and of which our whole collected brotherhood alike bear witness. Never have I beheld a life and deportment so thoroughly submissive. I placed him in an elevated rank in the community, but he appeared the lowest of all by the simplicity of his dress and his abstinence from all the enjoyments of the senses. I speak not of luxury, for that was a stranger to him; he refused everything but what was indispensable for the sustenance of life. He read continually, prayed often, and never spoke except when literary conversation or holy discussion compelled him to break silence. His mind and tongue seemed concentrated on philosophical and divine instructions. Simple, straightforward, reflecting on eternal judgments, shunning all evil, he consecrated the closing hours of an illustrious life. And when a mortal sickness seized him, with what fervent piety, what ardent inspiration did he make his last confession

of his sins; with what fervor did he receive the promise of eternal life; with what confidence did he recommend his body and soul to the tender mercies of the Saviour!"

Such was the death of Abélard, as attested by the most venerated man of that generation. And when we bear in mind the friendship and respect of such a man as Peter, and the exalted love of such a woman as Héloïse, it is surely not strange that posterity, and the French nation especially, should embalm his memory in their traditions.

Héloïse survived him twenty years, — a priestess of God, a mourner at the tomb of Abélard. And when in the solitude of the Paraclete she felt the approach of the death she had so long invoked, she directed the sisterhood to place her body beside that of her husband in the same leaden coffin. And there, in the silent aisles of that abbey-church, it remained for five hundred years, until it was removed by Lucien Bonaparte to the Museum of French Monuments in Paris, but again transferred, a few years after, to the cemetery of Père la Chaise. The enthusiasm of the French erected over the remains a beautiful monument; and "there still may be seen, day by day, the statues of the immortal lovers, decked with flowers and coronets, perpetually renewed with invisible hands, — the silent tribute of the heart of that consecrated sentiment which survives

all change. Thus do those votive offerings mysteriously convey admiration for the constancy and sympathy with the posthumous union of two hearts who transposed conjugal tenderness from the senses to the soul, who spiritualized the most ardent of human passions, and changed love itself into a holocaust, a martyrdom, and a holy sacrifice."

AUTHORITIES.

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JOAN OF ARC.

HEROIC WOMEN.

A. D. 1412-1431.

JOAN OF ARC.

HEROIC WOMEN.

PERHAPS the best known and most popular of heroines is Joan of Arc, called the Maid of Orleans. Certainly she is one of the most interesting characters in the history of France during the Middle Ages; hence I select her to illustrate heroic women. There are not many such who are known to fame; though heroic qualities are not uncommon in the gentler sex, and a certain degree of heroism enters into the character of all those noble and strongly marked women who have attracted attention and who have rendered great services. It marked many of the illustrious women of the Bible, of Grecian and Roman antiquity, and especially those whom chivalry produced in mediæval Europe; and even in our modern times intrepidity and courage have made many a woman famous, like Florence Nightingale. In Jewish history we point to Deborah, who delivered Israel from the hands of Jabin; and to Jael, who slew Sisera, the captain of Jabin's

hosts; and to Judith, who cut off the head of Holofernes. It was heroism, which is ever allied with magnanimity, that prompted the daughter of Jephtha to the most remarkable self-sacrifice recorded in history. There was a lofty heroism in Abigail, when she prevented David from shedding innocent blood. And among the Pagan nations, who does not admire the heroism of such women as we have already noticed? Chivalry, too, produced illustrious heroines in every country of Europe. We read of a Countess of March, in the reign of Edward III., who defended Dunbar with uncommon courage against Montague and an English army; a Countess of Montfort shut herself up in the fortress of Hennebon, and successfully defied the whole power of Charles of Blois; Jane Hatchett repulsed in person a considerable body of Burgundian troops; Altrude, Countess of Bertinora, advanced with an army to the relief of Ancona; Bona Lombardi, with a body of troops, liberated her husband from captivity; Isabella of Lorraine raised an army for the rescue of her husband; Queen Philippa, during the absence of her husband in Scotland, stationed herself in the Castle of Bamborough and defied the threats of Douglas, and afterwards headed an army against David, King of Scotland, and took him prisoner, and shut him up in the Tower of London.

But these illustrious women of the Middle Ages who

performed such feats of gallantry and courage belonged to the noble class; they were identified with aristocratic institutions; they lived in castles; they were the wives and daughters of feudal princes and nobles whose business was war, and who were rough and turbulent warriors, and sometimes no better than robbers, but who had the virtues of chivalry, which was at its height during the wars of Edward III. And yet neither the proud feudal nobles nor their courageous wives and daughters took any notice of the plebeian people, except to oppress and grind them down. No virtues were developed by feudalism among the people but submission, patience, and loyalty.

And thus it is extraordinary that such a person should appear in that chivalric age as Joan of Arc, who rose from the humblest class, who could neither read nor write, — a peasant girl without friends or influence, living among the Vosges mountains on the borders of Champagne and Lorraine. She was born in 1412, in the little obscure village of Domremy on the Meuse, on land belonging to the French crown. She lived in a fair and fertile valley on the line of the river, on the other side of which were the Burgundian territories. The Lorraine of the Vosges was a mountainous district covered with forests, which served for royal hunting parties. The village of Domremy itself was once a dependency of the abbey of St. Remy at Rheims.

This district had suffered cruelly from the wars between the Burgundians and the adherents of the Armagnacs, one of the great feudal families of France in the Middle Ages.

Joan, or Jeanne, was the third daughter of one of the peasant laborers of Domremy. She was employed by her mother in spinning and sewing, while her sisters and brothers were set to watch cattle. Her mother could teach her neither to read nor write, but early imbued her mind with the sense of duty. Joan was naturally devout, and faultless in her morals; simple, natural, gentle, fond of attending the village church; devoting herself, when not wanted at home, to nursing the sick, — the best girl in the village; strong, healthy, and beautiful; a spirit lowly but poetic, superstitious but humane, and fond of romantic adventures. But her piety was one of her most marked peculiarities, and somehow or other she knew more than we can explain of Scripture heroes and heroines.

One of the legends of that age and place was that the marches of Lorraine were to give birth to a maid who was to save the realm, — founded on an old prophecy of Merlin. It seems that when only thirteen years old Joan saw visions, and heard celestial voices bidding her to be good and to trust in God; and as virginity was supposed to be a supernal virtue, she vowed to remain a virgin, but told no one of her vow

or her visions. She seems to have been a girl of extraordinary good sense, which was as marked as her religious enthusiasm.

The most remarkable thing about this young peasant girl is that she claimed to have had visions and heard voices which are difficult to be distinguished from supernatural, — something like the dæmon of Socrates. She affirmed that Saint Michael the Archangel appeared to her in glory, also Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret, encouraging her in virtue, and indicating to her that a great mission was before her, — that she was to deliver her king and country. Such claims have not been treated with incredulity or contempt by French historians, especially Barante and Michelet, in view of the wonderful work she was instrumental in accomplishing.

At this period France was afflicted with that cruel war which had at intervals been carried on for nearly a century between the English and French kings, and which had arisen from the claims of Edward I. to the throne of France. The whole country was distracted, forlorn, and miserable; it was impoverished, overrun, and drained of fighting men. The war had exhausted the resources of England as well as those of France. The population of England at the close of this long series of wars was less than it was under Henry II. Those wars were more disastrous to the interests of both

the rival kingdoms than even those of the Crusades, and they were marked by great changes and great calamities. The victories of Crécy, Poictiers, and Agincourt — which shed such lustre on the English nation — were followed by reverses, miseries, and defeats, which more than balanced the glories of Edward the Black Prince and Henry V. Provinces were gained and lost, yet no decisive results followed either victory or defeat. The French kings, driven hither and thither, with a decimated people, and with the loss of some of their finest provinces, still retained their sovereignty.

At one time, about the year 1347, Edward III. had seemed to have attained the supreme object of his ambition. France lay bleeding at his feet; he had won the greatest victory of his age; Normandy already belonged to him, Guienne was recovered, Aquitaine was ceded to him, Flanders was on his side, and the possession of Brittany seemed to open his way to Paris. But in fourteen years these conquests were lost; the plague scourged England, and popular discontents added to the perplexities of the once fortunate monarch. Moreover, the House of Commons had come to be a power and a check on royal ambition. The death of the Black Prince consummated his grief and distraction, and the heroic king gave himself up in his old age to a disgraceful profligacy, and died in the arms of Alice Pierce, in the year 1377.

Fifty years pass by, and Henry V. is king of England, and renews his claim to the French throne. The battle of Agincourt (1415) gives to Henry V. the same *éclat* that the victory of Crécy had bestowed on Edward III. Again the French realm is devastated by triumphant Englishmen. The King of France is a captive; his Queen is devoted to the cause of Henry, the Duke of Burgundy is his ally, and he only needs the formal recognition of the Estates to take possession of the French throne. But in the year 1422, in the midst of his successes, he died of a disease which baffled the skill of all his physicians, leaving his kingdom to a child only nine years old, and the prosecution of the French war to his brother the Duke of Bedford, who was scarcely inferior to himself in military genius.

At this time, when Charles VI. of France was insane, and his oldest son Louis dead, his second son Charles declared himself King of France, as Charles VII. But only southern France acknowledged Charles, who at this time was a boy of fifteen years. All the northern provinces, even Guienne and Gascony, acknowledged Henry VI., the infant son of Henry V. of England. Charles's affairs, therefore, were in a bad way, and there was every prospect of the complete conquest of France. Even Paris was the prey alternately of the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, the last of whom were the adherents of Charles the Dauphin,

— the legitimate heir to the throne. He held his little court at Bourges, where he lived as gayly as he could, sometimes in want of the necessaries of life. His troops were chiefly Gascons, Lombards, and Scotch, who got no pay, and who lived by pillage. He was so hard pressed by the Duke of Bedford that he meditated a retreat into Dauphiné. It would seem that he was given to pleasures, and was unworthy of his kingdom, which he nearly lost by negligence and folly.

The Duke of Bedford, in order to drive Charles out of the central provinces, resolved to take Orleans, which was the key to the south, — a city on the north bank of the Loire, strongly fortified and well provisioned. This was in 1428. The probabilities were that this city would fall, for it was already besieged, and was beginning to suffer famine.

In this critical period for France, Joan of Arc appeared on the stage, being then a girl of sixteen (some say eighteen) years of age. Although Joan, as we have said, was uneducated, she yet clearly comprehended the critical condition of her country, and with the same confidence that David had in himself and in his God when he armed himself with a sling and a few pebbles to confront the full-armed giant of the Philistines, inspired by her heavenly visions she resolved to deliver France. She knew nothing of war; she had not been accustomed to equestrian exercises, like a

woman of chivalry; she had no friends; she had never seen great people; she was poor and unimportant. To the eye of worldly wisdom her resolution was perfectly absurd.

It was with the greatest difficulty that Joan finally obtained an interview with Boudricourt, the governor of Vaucouleurs; and he laughed at her, and bade her uncle take her home and chastise her for her presumption. She returned to her humble home, but with resolutions unabated. The voices encouraged her, and the common people believed in her. Again, in the red coarse dress of a peasant girl, she sought the governor, claiming that God had sent her. There was something so strange, so persistent, so honest about her that he reported her case to the King. Meanwhile, the Duke of Lorraine heard of her, and sent her a safe-conduct, and the people of Vaucouleurs came forward and helped her. They gave her a horse and the dress of a soldier; and the governor, yielding to her urgency, furnished her with a sword and a letter to the King. She left without seeing her parents, — which was one of the subsequent charges against her, — and prosecuted her journey amid great perils and fatigues, travelling by night with her four armed attendants.

After twelve days Joan reached Chinon, where the King was tarrying. But here new difficulties arose: she could not get an interview with the King; it was

opposed by his most influential ministers and courtiers. "Why waste precious time," said they, "when Orleans is in the utmost peril, to give attention to a mad peasant-girl, who, if not mad, must be possessed with a devil: a sorceress to be avoided; what can she do for France?" The Archbishop of Rheims, the prime-minister of Charles, especially was against her. The learned doctors of the schools derided her claims. It would seem that her greatest enemies were in the Church and the universities. "Not many wise, not many mighty are called." The deliverers of nations in great exigencies rarely have the favor of the great. But the women of the court spoke warmly in Joan's favor, for her conduct was modest and irreproachable; and after two days she was admitted to the royal castle, the Count of Vendôme leading her to the royal presence. Charles stood among a crowd of nobles, all richly dressed; but in her visions this pure enthusiast had seen more glories than an earthly court, and she was undismayed. To the King she repeated the words which had thus far acted like a charm: "I am Joan the Maid, sent by God to save France;" and she demanded troops. But the King was cautious; he sent two monks to her native village to inquire all about her, while nobles and ecclesiastics cross-questioned her. She was, however, treated courteously, and given in charge to the King's lieutenant, whose wife was

a woman of virtue and piety. Many distinguished people visited her in the castle to which she was assigned, on whom she made a good impression by her modesty, good sense, and sublime enthusiasm. It was long debated in the royal council whether she should be received or rejected; but as affairs were in an exceedingly critical condition, and Orleans was on the point of surrender, it was concluded to listen to her voice.

It must be borne in mind that the age was exceedingly superstitious, and the statesmen of the distracted and apparently ruined country probably decided to make use of this girl, not from any cordial belief in her mission, but from her influence on the people. She might stimulate them to renewed efforts. She was an obscure and ignorant peasant-girl, it was true, but God might have chosen her as an instrument. In this way very humble people, with great claims, have often got the ear and the approval of the wise and powerful, as instruments of Almighty Providence. When Moody and Sankey first preached in London, it was the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief-Justice — who happened to be religious men — that, amid the cynicism of ordinary men of rank, gave them the most encouragement, and frequently attended their meetings.

And the voices which inspired the Maid of Orleans herself, — what were these? Who can tell? Who

can explain such mysteries? I would not assert, nor would I deny, that they were the voices of inspiration. What is inspiration? It has often been communicated to men. Who can deny that the dæmon of Socrates was something more than a fancied voice? When did supernatural voices first begin to utter the power of God? When will the voices of inspiration cease to be heard on earth? In view of the fact that *she did* accomplish her mission, the voices which inspired this illiterate peasant to deliver France are not to be derided. Who can sit in judgment on the ways in which Providence is seen to act? May He not choose such instruments as He pleases? Are not all His ways mysterious, never to be explained by the reason of man? Did not the occasion seem to warrant something extraordinary? Here was a great country apparently on the verge of ruin. To the eye of reason and experience it seemed that France was to be henceforth ruled, as a subjugated country, by a foreign power. Royal armies had failed to deliver her. Loyalty had failed to arouse the people. Feudal envies and enmities had converted vassals into foes. The Duke of Burgundy, the most powerful vassal of France, was in arms against his liege lord. The whole land was rent with divisions and treasons. And the legitimate king, who ought to have been a power, was himself feeble, frivolous, and pleasure-seeking amid all his perils. *He* could not save the

country. Who could save it? There were no great generals. Universal despair hung over the land. The people were depressed. Military resources were insufficient. If France was to be preserved as an independent and powerful monarchy, something extraordinary must happen to save it. The hope in feudal armies had fled. In fact, only God could rescue the country in such perils and under such forlorn circumstances.

Joan of Arc believed in God, — that He could do what He pleased, that He was a power to be supplicated; and she prayed to Him to save France, since princes could not save the land, divided by their rivalries and jealousies and ambitions. And the conviction, after much prayer and fasting, was impressed upon her mind — no matter how, but it *was* impressed upon her — that God had chosen *her* as His instrument, that it was her mission to raise the siege of Orleans, and cause the young Dauphin to be crowned king at Rheims. This conviction gave her courage and faith and intrepidity. How could she, unacquainted with wars and sieges, show the necessary military skill and genius? She did not pretend to it. She claimed no other wisdom than that which was communicated to her by celestial voices. If she could direct a military movement in opposition to leaders of experience, it was only because this movement was what was indicated

by an archangel. And so decided and imperative was she, that royal orders were given to obey her. One thing was probable, whether a supernatural wisdom and power were given her or not, — she yet might animate the courage of others, she might stimulate them to heroic action, and revive their hopes; for if God was with them, who could be against them? What she had to do was simply this, — to persuade princes and nobles that the Lord would deliver the nation. Let the conviction be planted in the minds of a religious people that God is with them, and in some way will come to their aid if they themselves will put forth their own energies, and they will be almost sure to rally. And here was an inspired woman, as they supposed, ready to lead them on to victory, not by her military skill, but by indicating to them the way as an interpreter of the Divine will. This was not more extraordinary than the repeated deliverances of the Hebrew nation under religious leaders.

The signal deliverance of the French at that gloomy period from the hands of the English, by Joan of Arc, was a religious movement. The Maid is to be viewed as a religious phenomenon; she rested her whole power and mission on the supposition that she was inspired to point out the way of deliverance. She claimed nothing for herself, was utterly without vanity, ambition, or pride, and had no worldly ends to gain. Her

character was without a flaw. She was as near perfection as any mortal ever was: religious, fervent, unselfish, gentle, modest, chaste, patriotic, bent on one thing only, — to be of service to her country, without reward; and to be of service only by way of encouragement, and pointing out what seemed to her to be the direction of God.

So Joan fearlessly stood before kings and nobles and generals, yet in the modest gentleness of conscious virtue, to direct them what to do, as a sort of messenger of Heaven. What was rank or learning to her? If she was sent by a voice that spoke to her soul, and that voice was from God, what was human greatness to her? It paled before the greatness which commissioned her. In the discharge of her mission all men were alike in her eyes; the distinctions of rank faded away in the mighty issues which she wished to bring about, even the rescue of France from foreign enemies, and which she fully believed she could effect with God's aid, and in the way that He should indicate.

Whether the ruling powers fully believed in her or not, they at last complied with her wishes and prayers, though not until she had been subjected to many insults from learned priests and powerful nobles, whom she finally won by her modest and wise replies. Said one of them mockingly: "If it be God's will that the English shall quit France, there is no need for men-at-

arms." To whom she replied: "The men-at-arms must fight, and God shall give the victory." She saw no other deliverance than through fighting, and fighting bravely and heroically, as the means of success. She was commissioned, she said, to stimulate the men to fight, — not to pray, but to fight. She promised no rescue by supernatural means, but only through natural forces. France was not to despond, but to take courage, and fight. There was no imposture about her, only zeal and good sense, to impress upon the country the necessity of bravery and renewed exertions.

The Maid set out for the deliverance of the besieged city in a man's attire, deeming it more modest under her circumstances, and exposing her to fewer annoyances. She was arrayed in a suit of beautiful armor, with a banner after her own device, — white, embroidered with lilies, — and a sword which had been long buried behind the altar of a church. Under her inspiring influence an army of six thousand men was soon collected, commanded by the ablest and most faithful generals who remained to the King, and accompanied by the Archbishop of Rheims, who, though he had no great faith in her claims, yet saw in her a fitting instrument to arouse the people from despair. Before setting out from Blois she dictated a letter to the English captains before the besieged city, which to them must have seemed arrogant, insulting,

and absurd, in which she commanded them in God's name to return to their own country, assuring them that they fought not merely against the French, but against Him, and hence would be defeated.

The French captains had orders to obey their youthful leader, but not seeing the wisdom of her directions to march to Orleans on the north side of the Loire, they preferred to keep the river between them and the forts of the English. Not daring to disobey her, they misled her as to the position of Orleans, and advanced by the south bank, which proved a mistake, and called forth her indignation, since she did not profess to be governed by military rules, but by divine direction. The city had been defended by a series of forts and other fortifications of great strength, all of which had fallen into the hands of the besiegers; only the walls of the city remained. Joan succeeded in effecting an entrance for herself on a white charger through one of the gates, and the people thronged to meet her as an angel of deliverance, with the wildest demonstrations of joy. Her first act was to repair to the cathedral and offer up thanks to God; her next was to summon the enemy to retire. In the course of a few days the French troops entered the city with supplies. They then issued from the gates to retake the fortifications, which were well defended, cheered and encouraged by the heroic Maid, who stimulated them

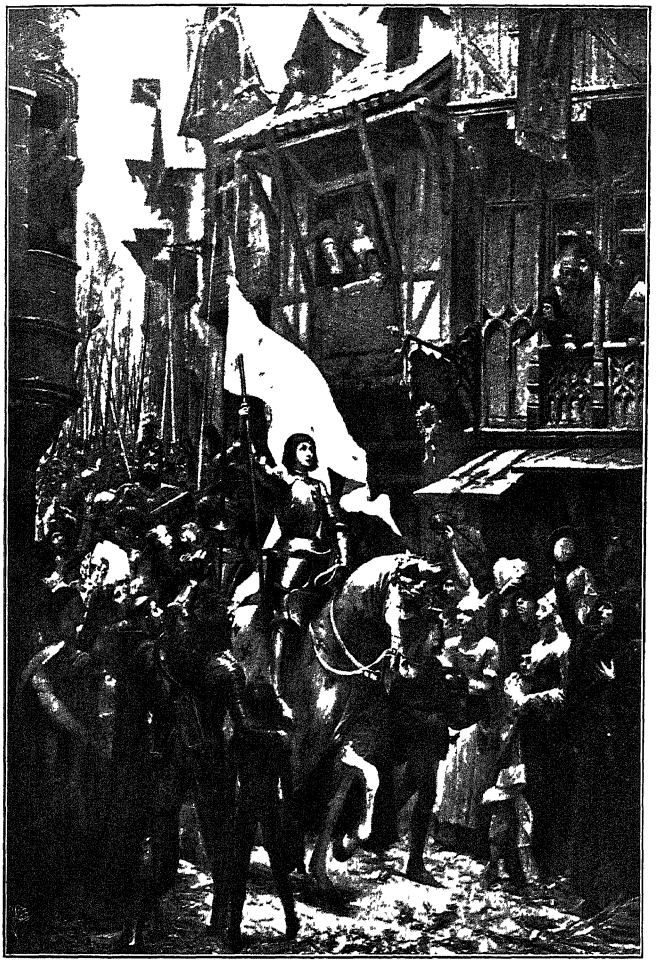
to daring deeds. The French were successful in their first assault, which seemed a miracle to the English yeomen, who now felt that they were attacked by unseen forces. Then other forts were assailed with equal success, Joan seeming like an inspired heroine, with her eyes flashing, and her charmed standard waving on to victory. The feats of valor which the French performed were almost incredible. Joan herself did not fight, but stimulated the heroism of her troops. The captains led the assault; the Maid directed their movements. After most of the forts were retaken, the troops wished to rest. Joan knew no rest, nor fear, nor sense of danger. She would hear of no cessation from bloody strife until all the fortifications were regained. At the assault on the last fort she herself was wounded; but she was as insensible to pain as she was to fear. As soon as her wound was dressed she hurried to the ramparts, and encouraged the troops, who were disposed to retire. By evening the last fort or bastile was taken, and the English retired, baffled and full of vengeance. The city was delivered. The siege was raised. Not an Englishman survived south of the Loire.

But only part of the mission of this heroic woman was fulfilled. She had delivered Orleans and saved the southern provinces. She had now the more difficult work to perform of crowning the King in the con-

secrated city, which was in the hands of the enemy, as well as the whole country between Orleans and Rheims. This task seemed to the King and his court to be absolutely impossible. So was the raising of the siege of Orleans, according to all rules of war. Although priests, nobles, and scholars had praised the courage and intrepidity of Joan, and exhorted the nation to trust her, since God seemed to help her, yet to capture a series of fortified cities which were in possession of superior forces seemed an absurdity. Only the common people had full faith in her, for as she was supposed to be specially aided by God, nothing seemed to them an impossibility. They looked upon her as raised up to do most wonderful things, — as one directly inspired. This faith in a girl of eighteen would not have been possible but for her exalted character. Amid the most searching cross-examinations from the learned, she commanded respect by the wisdom of her replies. Every inquiry had been made as to her rural life and character, and nothing could be said against her, but much in her favor; especially her absorbing piety, gentleness, deeds of benevolence, and utter unselfishness.

There was, therefore, a great admiration and respect for this girl, leading to the kindest and most honorable treatment of her from both prelates and nobles. But it was not a chivalric admiration; she did not belong

to a noble family, nor did she defend an institution. She was regarded as a second Deborah, commissioned to deliver a people. Nor could a saint have done her work. Bernard could kindle a crusade by his eloquence, but he could not have delivered Orleans; it required some one who could excite idolatrous homage. Only a woman, in that age, was likely to be deified by the people, — some immaculate virgin. Our remote German ancestors had in their native forests a peculiar reverence for woman. The priestesses of Germanic forests had often incited to battle. Their warnings or encouragements were regarded as voices from Heaven. Perhaps the deification and worship of the Virgin Mary — so hearty and poetical in the Middle Ages — may have indirectly aided the mission of the Maid of Orleans. The common people saw one of their own order arise and do marvellous things, bringing kings and nobles to her cause. How could she thus triumph over all the inequalities of feudalism unless divinely commissioned? How could she work what seemed to be almost miracles if she had not a supernatural power to assist her? Like the *regina angelorum*, she was *virgo castissima*. And if she was unlike common mortals, perhaps an inspired woman, what she promised would be fulfilled. In consequence of such a feeling an unbounded enthusiasm was excited among the people. They were ready to do her bidding, whether reasonable



After the painting by H. Scherer

VICTORIOUS JOAN OF ARC

or unreasonable to them, for there was a sacred mystery about her, — a reverence that extorted obedience. Worldly-wise statesmen and prelates had not this unbounded admiration, although they doubtless regarded her as a moral phenomenon which they could not understand. Her advice seemed to set aside all human prudence. Nothing seemed more rash or unreasonable than to undertake the conquest of so many fortified cities with such feeble means. It was one thing to animate starving troops to a desperate effort for their deliverance; it was another to assault fortified cities held by the powerful forces which had nearly completed the conquest of France.

The King came to meet the Maid at Tours, and would have bestowed upon her royal honors, for she had rendered a great service. But it was not honors she wanted. She seemed to be indifferent to all personal rewards, and even praises. She wanted only one thing, — an immediate march to Rheims. She even pleaded like a sensible general. She entreated Charles to avail himself of the panic which the raising of the siege of Orleans had produced, before the English could recover from it and bring reinforcements. But the royal council hesitated. It would imperil the King's person to march through a country guarded by hostile troops; and even if he could reach Rheims, it would be more difficult to take the city than to defend Orleans. The King had no

money to pay for an army. The enterprise was not only hazardous but impossible, the royal counsellors argued. But to this earnest and impassioned woman, seeing only one point, there was no such thing as impossibility. The thing *must* be done. The council gave reasons; she brushed them away as cobwebs. What is impossible for God to do? Then they asked her if she heard the voices. She answered, Yes; that she had prayed in secret, complaining of unbelief, and that the voice came to her, which said, "Daughter of God, go on, go on! I will be thy help!" Her whole face glowed and shone like the face of an angel.

The King, half persuaded, agreed to go to Rheims, but not until the English had been driven from the Loire. An army was assembled under the command of the Duke of Alençon, with orders to do nothing without the Maid's advice. Joan went to Selles to prepare for the campaign, and rejoined the army mounted on a black charger, while a page carried her furled banner. The first success was against Jargeau, a strongly fortified town, where she was wounded; but she was up in a moment, and the place was carried, and Joan and Alençon returned in triumph to Orleans. They then advanced against Baugé, another strong place, not merely defended by the late besiegers of Orleans, but a powerful army under Sir John Falstaff and Talbot was advancing to relieve it. Yet Baugé capitulated, the

English being panic-stricken, before the city could be relieved. Then the French and English forces encountered each other in the open field: victory sided with the French; and Falstaff himself fled, with the loss of three thousand men. The whole district then turned against the English, who retreated towards Paris; while a boundless enthusiasm animated the whole French army.

Soldiers and leaders now were equally eager for the march to Rheims; yet the King ingloriously held back, and the coronation seemed to be as distant as ever. But Joan with unexampled persistency insisted on an immediate advance, and the King reluctantly set out for Rheims with twelve thousand men. The first great impediment was the important city of Troyes, which was well garrisoned. After five days were spent before it, and famine began to be felt in the camp, the military leaders wished to raise the siege and return to the south. The Maid implored them to persevere, promising the capture of the city within three days. "We would wait six," said the Archbishop of Rheims, the chancellor and chief adviser of the King, "if we were certain we could take it." Joan mounted her horse, made preparations for the assault, cheered the soldiers, working far into the night; and the next day the city surrendered, and Charles, attended by Joan and his nobles, triumphantly entered the city.

The prestige of the Maid carried the day. The English soldiers dared not contend with one who seemed to be a favorite of Heaven. They had heard of Orleans and Jargeau. Chalons followed the example of Troyes. Then Rheims, when the English learned of the surrender of Troyes and Chalons, made no resistance; and in less than a month after the march had begun, the King entered the city, and was immediately crowned by the Archbishop, Joan standing by his side holding her sacred banner. This coronation was a matter of great political importance. Charles had a rival in the youthful King of England. The succession was disputed. Whoever should first be crowned in the city where the ancient kings were consecrated was likely to be acknowledged by the nation.

The mission of Joan was now accomplished. She had done what she promised, amid incredible difficulties. And now, kneeling before her anointed sovereign, she said, "Gracious King, now is fulfilled the pleasure of God!" And as she spoke she wept. She had given a king to France; and she had given France to her king Not by might, not by power had she done this, but by the Spirit of the Lord. She asked no other reward for her magnificent service than that her native village should be forever exempt from taxation. Feeling that the work for which she was raised up was done, she would willingly have retired to the seclusion of her

mountain home, but the leaders of France, seeing how much she was adored by the people, were not disposed to part with so great an instrument of success.

And Joan, too, entered with zeal upon those military movements which were to drive away forever the English from the soil of France. Her career had thus far been one of success and boundless enthusiasm; but now the tide turned, and her subsequent life was one of signal failure. Her only strength was in the voices which had bidden her to deliver Orleans and to crown the King. She had no genius for war. Though still brave and dauntless, though still preserving her innocence and her piety, she now made mistakes. She was also thwarted in her plans. She became, perhaps, self-assured and self-confident, and assumed prerogatives that only belonged to the King and his ministers, which had the effect of alienating them. They never secretly admired her, nor fully trusted her. Charles made a truce with the great Duke of Burgundy, who was in alliance with the English. Joan vehemently denounced the truce, and urged immediate and uncompromising action; but timidity, or policy, or political intrigues, defeated her counsels. The King wished to regain Paris by negotiation; all his movements were dilatory. At last his forces approached the capital, and occupied St. Denis. It was determined to attack the city. One corps was led by Joan;

but in the attack she was wounded, and her troops, in spite of her, were forced to retreat. Notwithstanding the retreat and her wound, however, she persevered, though now all to no purpose. The King himself retired, and the attack became a failure. Still Joan desired to march upon Paris for a renewed attack; but the King would not hear of it, and she was sent with troops badly equipped to besiege La Charité, where she again failed. For four weary months she remained inactive. She grew desperate; the voices neither encouraged nor discouraged her. She was now full of sad forebodings, yet her activity continued. She repaired to Compiègne, a city already besieged by the enemy, which she wished to relieve. In a sortie she was outnumbered, and was defeated and taken prisoner by John of Luxemburg, a vassal of the Duke of Burgundy.

The news of this capture produced great exhilaration among the English and Burgundians. Had a great victory been won, the effect could not have been greater. It broke the spell. The Maid was human, like other women; and her late successes were attributed not to her inspiration, but to demoniacal enchantments. She was looked upon as a witch or as a sorceress, and was now guarded with especial care for fear of a rescue, and sent to a strong castle belonging to John of Luxemburg. In Paris, on receipt of the news, the Duke of Bedford caused *Te Deums* to be sung

in all the churches, and the University and the Vicar of the Inquisition demanded of the Duke of Burgundy that she should be delivered to ecclesiastical justice.

The remarkable thing connected with the capture of the Maid was that so little effort was made to rescue her. She had rendered to Charles an inestimable service, and yet he seems to have deserted her; neither he nor his courtiers appeared to regret her captivity, — probably because they were jealous of her. Gratitude was not one of the virtues of feudal kings. What sympathy could feudal barons have with a low-born peasant girl? They had used her; but when she could be useful no longer, they forgot her. Out of sight she was out of mind; and if remembered at all, she was regarded as one who could no longer provoke jealousy. Jealousy is a devouring passion, especially among nobles. The generals of Charles VII. could not bear to have it said that the rescue of France was effected, not by their abilities, but by the inspired enthusiasm of a peasant girl. She had scorned intrigues and baseness, and these marked all the great actors on the stage of history in that age. So they said it was a judgment of Heaven upon her because she would not hear counsel. "No offer for her ransom, no threats of vengeance came from beyond the Loire." But the English, who had suffered most from the loss of Orleans, were eager to get possession of her person, and were willing even to pay

extravagant rewards for her delivery into their hands. They had their vengeance to gratify. They also wished it to appear that Charles VII. was aided by the Devil; that his cause was not the true one; that Henry VI. was the true sovereign of France. The more they could throw discredit and obloquy upon the Maid of Orleans, the better their cause would seem. It was not as a prisoner of war that the English wanted her, but as a victim, whose sorceries could only be punished by death. But they could not try her and condemn her until they could get possession of her; and they could not get possession of her unless they bought her. The needy John of Luxemburg sold her to the English for ten thousand livres, and the Duke of Burgundy received political favors.

The agent employed by the English in this nefarious business was Couchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, who had been driven out of his city by Joan, — an able and learned man, who aspired to the archbishopric of Rouen. He set to work to inflame the University of Paris and the Inquisition against her. The Duke of Bedford did not venture to bring his prize to Paris, but determined to try her in Rouen; and the trial was intrusted to the Bishop of Beauvais, who conducted it after the forms of the Inquisition. It was simply a trial for heresy.

Joan tried for heresy! On that ground there was

never a more innocent person tried by the Inquisition. Her whole life was notoriously virtuous. She had been obedient to the Church; she had advanced no doctrines which were not orthodox. She was too ignorant to be a heretic; she had accepted whatever her spiritual teacher had taught her; in fact, she was a Catholic saint. She lived in the ecstasies of religious faith like a Saint Theresa. She spent her time in prayer and religious exercises; she regularly confessed, and partook of the sacraments of the Church. She did not even have a single sceptical doubt; she simply affirmed that she obeyed voices that came from God.

Nothing could be more cruel than the treatment of this heroic girl, and all under the forms of ecclesiastical courts. It was the diabolical design of her enemies to make it appear that she had acted under the influence of the Devil; that she was a heretic and a sorceress. Nothing could be more forlorn than her condition. No efforts had been made to ransom her. She was alone, and unsupported by friends, having not a single friendly counsellor. She was carried to the castle of Rouen and put in an iron cage, and chained to its bars; she was guarded by brutal soldiers, was mocked by those who came to see her, and finally was summoned before her judges predetermined on her death. They went through the forms of trial, hoping to extort from the Maid some damaging confessions, or

to entangle her with their sophistical and artful questions. Nothing perhaps on our earth has ever been done more diabolically than under the forms of ecclesiastical law; nothing can be more atrocious than the hypocrisies and acts of inquisitors. The judges of Joan extorted from her that she had revelations, but she refused to reveal what these had been. She was asked whether she was in a state of grace. If she said she was not, she would be condemned as an outcast from divine favor; if she said she was, she would be condemned for spiritual pride. All such traps were set for this innocent girl. But she acquitted herself wonderfully well, and showed extraordinary good sense. She warded off their cunning and puerile questions. They tried every means to entrap her. They asked her in what shape Saint Michael had appeared to her; whether or no he was naked; whether he had hair; whether she understood the feelings of those who had once kissed her feet; whether she had not cursed God in her attempt to escape at Beauvoir; whether it was for her merit that God sent His angel; whether God hated the English; whether her victory was founded on her banner or on herself; when had she learned to ride a horse.

The judges framed seventy accusations against her, mostly frivolous, and some unjust, — to the effect that she had received no religious training; that she had

worn mandrake; that she dressed in man's attire; that she had bewitched her banner and her ring; that she believed her apparitions were saints and angels; that she had blasphemed; and other charges equally absurd. Under her rigid trials she fell sick; but they restored her, reserving her for a more cruel fate. All the accusations and replies were sent to Paris, and the learned doctors decreed, under English influence, that Joan was a heretic and a sorceress.

After another series of insulting questions, she was taken to the market-place of Rouen to receive sentence, and then returned to her gloomy prison, where they mercifully allowed her to confess and receive the sacrament. She was then taken in a cart, under guard of eight hundred soldiers, to the place of execution; rudely dragged to the funeral pile, fastened to a stake, and fire set to the faggots. She expired, exclaiming, "Jesus, Jesus! My voices, my voices!"

Thus was sacrificed one of the purest and noblest women in the whole history of the world, — a woman who had been instrumental in delivering her country, but without receiving either honor or gratitude from those for whom she had fought and conquered. She died a martyr to the cause of patriotism, — not for religion, but for her country. She died among enemies, unsupported by friends or by those whom she had so greatly benefited, and with as few religious consolations

as it was possible to give. Never was there greater cruelty and injustice inflicted on an innocent and noble woman. The utmost ingenuity of vindictive priests never extorted from her a word which criminated her, though they subjected her to inquisitorial examinations for days and weeks. Burned as an infidel, her last words recognized the Saviour in whom she believed; burned as a witch, she never confessed to anything but the voices of God. Her heroism, even at the stake, should have called out pity and admiration; but her tormentors were insensible to both. She was burned really from vengeance, because she had turned the tide of conquest. "The Jews," says Michelet. "never exhibited the rage against Jesus that the English did against the Pucelle," in whom purity, sweetness, and heroic goodness dwelt. Never was her life stained by a single cruel act. In the midst of her torments she did not reproach her tormentors. In the midst of her victories she wept for the souls of those who were killed; and while she incited others to combat, she herself did not use her sword. In man's attire she showed a woman's soul. Pity and gentleness were as marked as courage and self-confidence.

It is one of the most insolvable questions in history why so little effort was made by the French to save the Maid's life. It is strange that the University of Paris should have decided against her, after she had

rendered such transcendent services. Why should the priests of that age have treated her as a witch, when she showed all the traits of an angel? Why should not the most unquestioning faith have preserved her from the charge of heresy? Alas! she was only a peasant girl, and the great could not bear to feel that the country had been saved by a peasant. Even chivalry, which worshipped women, did not come to Joan's aid. How great must have been feudal distinctions when such a heroic woman was left to perish! How deep the ingratitude of the King and his court, to have made no effort to save her!

Joan made one mistake: after the coronation of Charles VII. she should have retired from the field of war, for her work was done. Such a transcendent heroism could not have sunk into obscurity. But this was not to be; she was to die as a martyr to her cause.

After her death the English carried on war with new spirit for a time, and Henry VI. of England was crowned in Paris, at Notre Dame. He was crowned, however, by an English, not by a French prelate. None of the great French nobles even were present. The coronation was a failure. Gradually all France was won over to the side of Charles. He was a contemptible monarch, but he was the legitimate King of France. All classes desired peace; all parties were weary of war. The

Treaty of Arras, in 1435, restored peace between Charles and Philip of Burgundy; and in the same year the Duke of Bedford died. In 1436 Charles took possession of Paris. In 1445 Henry VI. married Margaret of Anjou, a kinswoman of Charles VII. In 1448 Charles invaded Normandy, and expelled the English from the duchy which for four hundred years had belonged to the kings of England. Soon after Guienne fell. In 1453 Calais alone remained to England, after a war of one hundred years.

At last a tardy justice was done to the memory of her who had turned the tide of conquest. The King, ungrateful as he had been, now ennobled her family and their descendants, even in the female line, and bestowed upon them pensions and offices. In 1452, twenty years after the martyrdom, the Pope commissioned the Archbishop of Rheims and two other prelates, aided by an inquisitor, to inquire into the trial of Joan of Arc. They met in Notre Dame. Messengers were sent into the country where she was born, to inquire into her history; and all testified — priests and peasants — to the moral beauty of her character, to her innocent and blameless life, her heroism in battle, and her good sense in counsel. And the decision of the prelates was that her visions came from God; that the purity of her motives and the good she did to her country justified her in leaving her parents

and wearing a man's dress. They pronounced the trial at Rouen to have been polluted with wrong and calumny, and freed her name from every shadow of disgrace. The people of Orleans instituted an annual religious festival to her honor. The Duke of Orleans gave a grant of land to her brothers, who were ennobled. The people of Rouen raised a stone cross to her memory in the market-place where she was burned. In later times, the Duchess of Orleans, wife of the son and heir of Louis Philippe, modelled with her own hands an exquisite statue of Joan of Arc. But the most beautiful and impressive tribute which has ever been paid to her name and memory was a *fête* of three days' continuance, in 1856, on the anniversary of the deliverance of Orleans, when the celebrated Bishop Dupanloup pronounced one of the most eloquent eulogies ever offered to the memory of a heroine or benefactor. That ancient city never saw so brilliant a spectacle as that which took place in honor of its immortal deliverer, who was executed so cruelly under the superintendence of a Christian bishop, — one of those iniquities in the name of justice which have so often been perpetrated on this earth. It was a powerful nation which killed her, and one equally powerful which abandoned her.

But the martyrdom of Joan of Arc is an additional confirmation of the truth that it is only by self-sacrifice

that great deliverances have been effected. Nothing in the moral government of God is more mysterious than the fate which usually falls to the lot of great benefactors. To us it seems sad and unjust; and nothing can reconcile us to the same but the rewards of a future and higher life. And yet amid the flames there arise the voices which save nations. Joan of Arc bequeathed to her country, especially to the common people, some great lessons; namely, not to despair amid great national calamities; to believe in God as the true deliverer from impending miseries, who, however, works through natural causes, demanding personal heroism as well as faith. There was great grandeur in that peasant girl, — in her exalted faith at Domremy, in her heroism at Orleans, in her triumph at Rheims, in her trial and martyrdom at Rouen. But unless she had suffered, nothing would have remained of this grandeur in the eyes of posterity. The injustice and meanness with which she was treated have created a lasting sympathy for her in the hearts of her nation. She was great because she died for her country, serene and uncomplaining amid injustice, cruelty, and ingratitude, — the injustice of an ecclesiastical court presided over by a learned bishop; the cruelty of the English generals and nobles; the ingratitude of her own sovereign, who made no effort to redeem her. She was sold by one potentate to another as if she were merchandise, — as if she were a slave. And

those graces and illuminations which under other circumstances would have exalted her into a catholic saint, like an Elizabeth of Hungary or a Catherine of Sienna, were turned against her, by diabolical executioners, as a proof of heresy and sorcery. We repeat again, never was enacted on this earth a greater injustice. Never did a martyr perish with more triumphant trust in the God whose aid she had so uniformly invoked. And it was this triumphant Christian faith as she ascended the funeral pyre which has consecrated the visions and the voices under whose inspiration the Maid led a despairing nation to victory and a glorious future.

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SAINT THERESA.

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM.

A. D. 1515–1582

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RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM.

I HAVE already painted in Cleopatra, to the best of my ability, the Pagan woman of antiquity, revelling in the pleasures of vanity and sensuality, with a feeble moral sense, and without any distinct recognition of God or of immortality. The genius of Paganism was simply the deification of the Venus Polyhymnia, — the adornment and pleasure of what is perishable in man. It directed all the energies of human nature to the pampering and decorating of this mortal body, not believing that the mind and soul which animate it, and which are the sources of all its glory, would ever live beyond the grave. A few sages believed differently, — men who rose above the spirit of Paganism, but not such men as Alexander, or Cæsar, or Antony, the foremost men of all the world in grand ambitions and successes. Taking it for granted that this world is the only theatre for enjoyment, or action, or thought, men naturally said, "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow

we die." And hence no higher life was essayed than that which furnished sensual enjoyments, or incited an ambition to be strong and powerful. Of course, riches were sought above everything, since these furnished the means of gratifying those pleasures which were most valued, or stimulating that vanity whose essence is self-idolatry.

With this universal rush of humanity after pleasures which centred in the body, the soul was left dishonored and uncared for, except by a few philosophers. I do not now speak of the mind, for there were intellectual pleasures derived from conversation, books, and works of art. And some called the mind divine, in distinction from matter; some speculated on the nature of each, and made mind and matter in perpetual antagonism, as the good and evil forces of the universe. But the prevailing opinion was that the whole man perished, or became absorbed in the elemental forces of nature, or reappeared again in new forms upon the earth, to expiate those sins of which human nature is conscious. To some men were given longings after immortality, not absolute convictions, — men like Plato, Socrates, and Cicero. But I do not speak of these illustrious exceptions; I mean the great mass of the people, especially the rich and powerful and pleasure-seeking, — those whose supreme delight was in banquets, palaces, or intoxicating excitements, like chariot-racings and

gladiatorial shows; yea, triumphal processions to raise the importance of the individual self, and stimulate vanity and pride.

Hence Paganism put a small value, comparatively, on even intellectual enjoyments. It cultivated those arts which appealed to the senses more than to the mind; it paid dearly for any sort of intellectual training which could be utilized,—oratory, for instance, to enable a lawyer to gain a case, or a statesman to control a mob; it rewarded those poets who could sing blended praises to Bacchus and Venus, or who could excite the passions at the theatre. But it paid still higher prices to athletes and dancers, and almost no price at all to those who sought to stimulate a love of knowledge for its own sake,—men like Socrates, for example, who walked barefooted, and lived on fifty dollars a year, and who at last was killed out of pure hatred for the truths he told and the manner in which he told them,—this martyrdom occurring in the most intellectual city of the world. In both Greece and Rome there was an intellectual training for men bent on utilitarian ends; even as we endow schools of science and technology to enable us to conquer nature, and to become strong and rich and comfortable; but there were no schools for women, whose intellects were disdained, and who were valued only as servants or animals,—either to drudge, or to please the senses.

But even if there were some women in Paganism of high mental education, — if women sometimes rose above their servile condition by pure intellect, and amused men by their wit and humor, — still their souls were little thought of. Now, it is the soul of woman — not her mind, and still less her body — which elevates her, and makes her, in some important respects, the superior of man himself. He has dominion over her by force of will, intellect, and physical power. When she has dominion over him, it is by those qualities which come from her soul, — her superior nature, greater than both mind and body. Paganism never recognized the superior nature, especially in woman, — that which must be fed, even in this world, or there will be constant unrest and discontent. And inasmuch as Paganism did not feed it, women were unhappy, especially those who had great capacities. They may have been comfortable, but they were not contented.

Hence, women made no great advance either in happiness or in power, until Christianity revealed the greatness of the soul, its perpetual longings, its infinite capacities, and its future satisfactions. The spiritual exercises of the soul then became the greatest source of comfort amid those evils which once ended in despair. With every true believer, the salvation of so precious a thing necessarily became the end of life, for Christianity taught that the soul might be lost. In view of the

soul's transcendent value, therefore, the pleasures of the body became of but little account in comparison. Riches are good, power is desirable; eating and drinking are very pleasant; praise, flattery, admiration, — all these things delight us, and under Paganism were sought and prized. But Christianity said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Christianity, then, set about in earnest to rescue this soul which Paganism had disregarded. In consequence of this, women began to rise, and shine in a new light. They gained a new charm, even moral beauty, — yea, a new power, so that they could laugh at ancient foes, and say triumphantly, when those foes sought to crush them, "O Grave, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?" There is no beauty among women like this moral beauty, whose seat is in the soul. It is not only a radiance, but it is a defence: it protects women from the wrath and passion of men. With glory irradiating every feature, it says to the boldest, Thus far shalt thou come and no farther. It is a benediction to the poor and a welcome to the rich. It shines with such unspeakable loveliness, so rich in blessing and so refined in ecstasy, that men gaze with more than admiration, even with sentiments bordering on that adoration which the Middle Ages felt for the mother of our Lord, and which they also bestowed upon departed saints. In the immortal paintings of Raphael and

Murillo we get some idea of this moral beauty, which is so hard to copy.

So woman passed gradually from contempt and degradation to the veneration of men, when her soul was elevated by the power which Paganism never knew. But Christianity in the hands of degenerate Romans and Gothic barbarians made many mistakes in its efforts to save so priceless a thing as a human soul. Among other things, it instituted monasteries and convents, both for men and women, in which they sought to escape the contaminating influences which had degraded them. If Paganism glorified the body, monasticism despised it. In the fierce protests against the peculiar sins which had marked Pagan life, — gluttony, wine-drinking, unchastity, ostentatious vanities, and turbulent mirth, — monasticism decreed abstinence, perpetual virginity, the humblest dress, the entire disuse of ornaments, silence, and meditation. These were supposed to disarm the demons who led into foul temptation. Moreover, monasticism encouraged whatever it thought would make the soul triumphant over the body, almost independent of it Whatever would feed the soul, it said, should be sought, and whatever would pamper the body should be avoided.

As a natural consequence of all this, piety gradually came to seek its most congenial home in monastic retreats, and to take on a dreamy, visionary, and intro-

spective mood. The "saints" saw visions of both angels and devils, and a superstitious age believed in their revelations. The angels appeared to comfort and sustain the soul in temptations and trials, and the devils came to pervert and torment it. Good judgment and severe criticism were lost to the Church; and, moreover, the gloomy theology of the Middle Ages, all based on the fears of endless physical torments, — for the wretched body was the source of all evil, and therefore must be punished, — gave sometimes a repulsive form to piety itself. Intellectually, that piety now excites our contempt, because it was so much mixed up with dreams and ecstasies and visions and hallucinations. It produces a moral aversion also, because it was austere, inhuman, and sometimes cruel. Both monks and nuns, when they conformed to the rules of their order, were sad, solitary, dreary-looking people, although their faces shone occasionally in the light of ecstatic visions of heaven and the angels.

But whatever mistakes monasticism made, however repulsive the religious life of the Middle Ages, — in fact, all its social life, — still it must be admitted that the aim of the time was high. Men and women were enslaved by superstitions, but they were not Pagan. Our own age is, in some respects, more Pagan than were the darkest times of mediæval violence and priestly despotism, since we are reviving the very things against

which Christianity protested as dangerous and false,— the pomps, the banquets, the ornaments, the arts of the old Pagan world.

Now, all this is preliminary to what I have to say of Saint Theresa. We cannot do justice to this remarkable woman without considering the sentiments of her day, and those circumstances that controlled her. We cannot properly estimate her piety — that for which she was made a saint in the Roman calendar — without being reminded of the different estimate which Paganism and Christianity placed upon the soul, and consequently the superior condition of women in our modern times. Nor must we treat lightly or sneeringly that institution which was certainly one of the steps by which women rose in the scale both of religious and social progress. For several ages nuns were the only charitable women, except queens and princesses, of whom we have record. But they were drawn to their calm retreats, not merely to serve God more effectually, nor merely to perform deeds of charity, but to study. As we have elsewhere said, the convents in those days were schools no less than asylums and hospitals, and were especially valued for female education. However, in these retreats religion especially became a passion. There was a fervor in it which in our times is unknown. It was not a matter of opinion, but of faith. In these

times there may be more wisdom, but in the Middle Ages there was more zeal and more unselfishness and more intensity, — all which is illustrated by the sainted woman I propose to speak of.

Saint Theresa was born at Avila, in Castile, in the year 1515, at the close of the Middle Ages; but she really belonged to the Middle Ages, since all the habits, customs, and opinions of Spain at that time were mediæval. The Reformation never gained a foothold in Spain. None of its doctrines penetrated that country, still less modified or changed its religious customs, institutions, or opinions. And hence Saint Theresa virtually belonged to the age of Bernard, and Anselm, and Elizabeth of Hungary. She was of a good family as much distinguished for virtues as for birth. Both her father and mother were very religious and studious, reading good books, and practising the virtues which Catholicism ever enjoined, — alms-giving to the poor, and kindness to the sick and infirm, — truthful, chaste, temperate, and God-fearing. They had twelve children, all good, though Theresa seems to have been the favorite, from her natural sprightliness and enthusiasm. Among the favorite books of the Middle Ages were the lives of saints and martyrs; and the history of these martyrs made so great an impression on the mind of the youthful Theresa that she and one of her brothers meditated a flight into Africa that they might be put

to death by the Moors, and thus earn the crown of martyrdom, as well as the eternal rewards in heaven which martyrdom was supposed to secure. This scheme being defeated by their parents, they sought to be hermits in the garden which belonged to their house, playing the part of monks and nuns.

At eleven, Theresa lost her mother, and took to reading romances, which, it seems, were books of knight-errantry, at the close of the chivalric period. These romances were innumerable, and very extravagant and absurd, and were ridiculed by Cervantes, half a century afterwards, in his immortal "Don Quixote." Although Spain was mediæval in its piety in the sixteenth century, this was the period of its highest intellectual culture, especially in the drama. De Vega and Cervantes were enough of themselves to redeem Spain from any charges of intellectual stupidity. But for the Inquisition, and the Dominican monks, and the Jesuits, and the demoralization which followed the conquests of Cortés and Pizarro, Spain might have rivalled Germany, France, and England in the greatness of her literature. At this time there must have been considerable cultivation among the class to which Theresa belonged.

Although she never was sullied by what are called mortal sins, it would appear that as a girl of fourteen Theresa was, like most other girls, fond of dress and

perfumes and ornaments, elaborate hair-dressing, and of anything which would make the person attractive. Her companions also were gay young ladies of rank, as fond of finery as she was, whose conversation was not particularly edifying, but whose morals were above reproach. Theresa was sent to a convent in her native town by her father, that she might be removed from the influence of gay companions, especially her male cousins, who could not be denied the house. At first she was quite unhappy, finding the convent dull, triste, and strict. I cannot conceive of a convent being a very pleasant place for a worldly young lady, in any country or in any age of the world. Its monotony and routine and mechanical duties must ever have been irksome. The pleasing manners and bright conversation of Theresa caused the nuns to take an unusual interest in her; and one of them in particular exercised a great influence upon her, so that she was inclined at times to become a nun herself, though not of a very strict order, since she was still fond of the pleasures of the world.

At sixteen, Theresa's poor health made it necessary for her to return to her father's house. When she recovered she spent some time with her uncle, afterwards a monk, who made her read good books, and impressed upon her the vanity of the world. In a few months she resolved to become a nun, — out of servile fear

rather than love, as she avers. The whole religious life of the Middle Ages was based on fear, — the fear of being tortured forever by devils and hell. So universal and powerful was this fear that it became the leading idea of the age, from which very few were ever emancipated. On this idea were based the excommunications, the interdicts, and all the spiritual weapons by which the clergy ruled the minds of the people. On this their ascendency rested; they would have had but little power without it. It was therefore their interest to perpetuate it. And as they ruled by exciting fears, so they themselves were objects of fear rather than of love.

All this tended to make the Middle Ages gloomy, funereal, repulsive, austere. There was a time when I felt a sort of poetic interest in these dark times, and called them ages of faith; but the older I grow, and the more I read and reflect, the more dreary do those ages seem to me. Think of a state of society when everything suggested wrath and vengeance, even in the character of God, and when this world was supposed to be under the dominion of devils! Think of an education which impressed on the minds of interesting young girls that the trifling sins which they committed every day, and which proceeded from the exuberance of animal spirits, justly doomed them to everlasting burnings, without expiations, — a creed so cruel as to undermine the health, and make life itself a misery! Think of a

spiritual despotism so complete that confessors and spiritual fathers could impose or remove these expiations, and thus open the door to heaven or hell!

And yet this despotism was the logical result of a generally accepted idea, instead of the idea being an outgrowth of the despotism, since the clergy, who controlled society by working on its fears, were themselves as complete victims and slaves as the people whom they led. This idea was that the soul would be lost unless sins were expiated, and expiated by self-inflicted torments on the body. Paul taught a more cheerful doctrine of forgiveness, based on divine and infinite love, — on faith and repentance. The Middle Ages also believed in repentance, but taught that repentance and penance were synonymous. The asceticism of the Church in its conflict with Paganism led to this perversion of apostolic theology. The very idea that Christianity was sent to subvert, — that is, the old Oriental idea of self-expiation, seen among the fakirs and sofis and Brahmins alike, and in a less repulsive form among the Pharisees, — became once again the ruling idea of theologians. The theologians of the Middle Ages taught this doctrine of penance and self-expiation with peculiar zeal and sincerity; and fear rather than love ruled the Christian world. Hence the austerity of convent life. Its piety centred in the perpetual crucifixion of the body, in the suppression of desires and

pleasures which are perfectly innocent. The highest ideal of Christian life, according to convent rules, was a living and protracted martyrdom, and in some cases even the degradation of our common humanity. Christianity nowhere enjoins the eradication of passions and appetites, but the control of them. It would not mutilate and disfigure the body, for it is a sacred temple, to be made beautiful and attractive. On the other hand the Middle Ages strove to make the body appear repulsive, and the most loathsome forms of misery and disease to be hailed as favorite modes of penance. And as Christ suffered agonies on the cross, so the imitation of Christ was supposed to be a cheerful and ready acceptance of voluntary humiliation and bodily torments, — the more dreadful to bear, the more acceptable to Deity as a propitiation for sin. Is this statement denied? Read the biographies of the saints of the Middle Ages. See how penance, and voluntary suffering, and unnecessary exposure of the health, and eager attention to the sick in loathsome and contagious diseases, and the severest and most protracted fastings and vigils, enter into their piety; and how these extorted popular admiration, and received the applause and rewards of the rulers of the Church. I never read a book which left on my mind such repulsive impressions of mediæval piety as the Life of Catherine of Sienna, by her confessor, — himself one of the great ecclesiastical dignitaries of the age. I never read any-

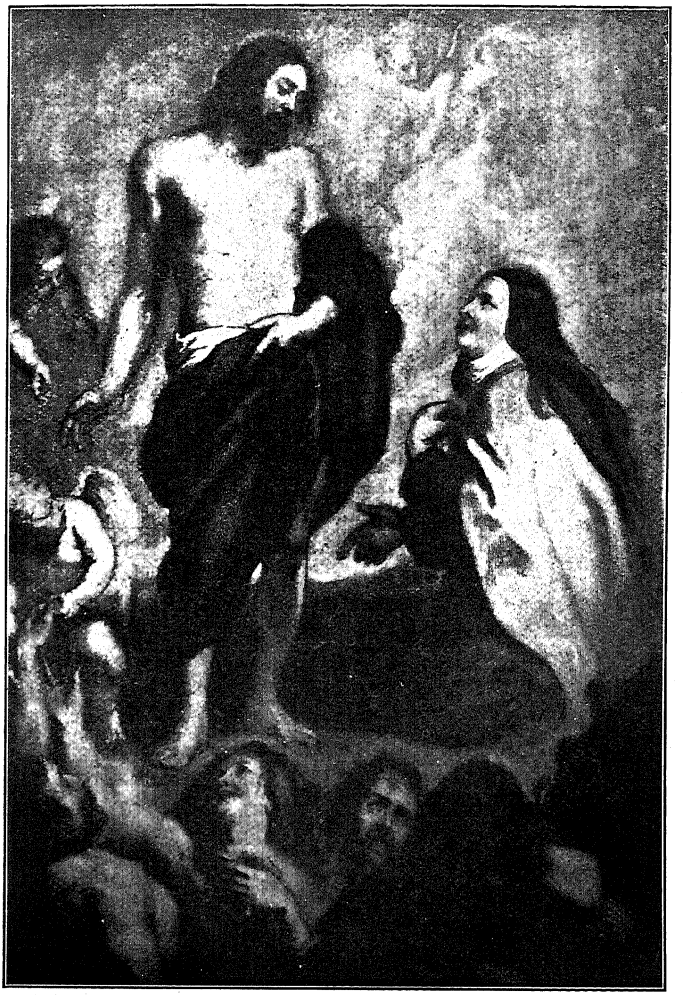
thing so debasing and degrading to our humanity. One turns with disgust from the narration of her lauded penances.

So we see in the Church of the Middle Ages — the Church of Saint Theresa — two great ideas struggling for the mastery, yet both obscured and perverted: faith in a crucified Redeemer, which gave consolation and hope; and penance, rather than repentance, which sought to impose the fetters of the ancient spiritual despotisms. In the early Church, faith and repentance went hand in hand together to conquer the world, and to introduce joy and peace and hope among believers. In the Middle Ages, faith was divorced from repentance, and took penance instead as a companion, — an old enemy; so that there was discord in the Christian camp, and fears returned, and joys were clouded. Sometimes faith prevailed over penance, as in the monastery of Bec, where Anselm taught a cheerful philosophy, — or in the monastery of Clairvaux, where Bernard lived in seraphic ecstasies, his soul going out in love and joy; and then again penance prevailed, as in those grim retreats where hard inquisitors inflicted their cruel torments. But penance, on the whole, was the ruling power, and cast over society its funereal veil of dreariness and fear. Yet penance, enslaving as it was, still clung to the infinite value of the soul, the grandest fact in all revelations, and hence society did not relax into Pagan-

ism. Penance would save the soul, though surrounding it with gloom, maceration, heavy labors, bitter tears, terrible anxieties. The wearied pilgrim, the isolated monk, the weeping nun, the groaning peasant, the penitent baron, were not thrown into absolute despair, since there was a possibility of appeasing divine wrath, and since they all knew that Christ had died in order to save some,—yea, all who conformed to the direction of those spiritual guides which the Church and the age imposed.

Such was Catholic theology when Theresa — an enthusiastic, amiable, and virtuous girl of sixteen, but at one time giddy and worldly — wished to enter a convent for the salvation of her soul. She says she was influenced *by servile fear*, and not by love. It is now my purpose to show how this servile fear was gradually subdued by divine grace, and how she became radiant with *love*, — in short, an emancipated woman, in all the glorious liberty of the gospel of Christ; although it was not until she had passed through a most melancholy experience of bondage to the leading ideas of her Church and age. It is this emancipation which made her one of the great women of history, not complete and entire, but still remarkable, especially for a Spanish woman. It was love casting out fear.

After a mental struggle of three months, Theresa resolved to become a nun. But her father objected,



From the painting by Raphael

ST. THERESA INTERCEDING

partly out of his great love for her, and partly on account of her delicate and fragile body. Her health had always been poor: she was subject to fainting fits and burning fevers. Whether her father, at last, consented to her final retirement from the world I do not discover from her biography; but, with his consent or without it, she entered the convent and assumed the religious habit, — not without bitter pangs on leaving her home, for she did violence to her feelings, having no strong desire for monastic seclusion, and being warmly attached to her father. Neither love to God nor a yearning after monastic life impelled the sacrifice, as she admits, but a perverted conscience. She felt herself in danger of damnation for her sins, and wished to save her soul, and knew no other way than to enter upon the austerities of the convent, which she endured with remarkable patience and submission, suffering not merely from severities to which she was unaccustomed, but great illness in consequence of them. A year was passed in protracted miseries, amounting to martyrdom, from fainting fits, heart palpitations, and other infirmities of the body. The doctors could do nothing for her, and her father was obliged to order her removal to a more healthful monastery, where no vows of enclosure were taken.

And there she remained a year, with no relief to her sufferings for three months. Her only recreation was

books, which fortified her courage. She sought instruction, but found no one who could instruct her so as to give repose to her struggling soul. She endeavored to draw her thoughts from herself by reading. She could not even pray without a book. She was afraid to be left alone with herself. Her situation was made still worse by the fact that her superiors did not understand her. When they noticed that she sought solitude, and shed tears for her sins, they fancied she had a discontented disposition, and added to her unhappiness by telling her so. But she conformed to all the rules, irksome or not, and endured every mortification, and even performed acts of devotion which were not required. She envied the patience of a poor woman who died of the most painful ulcers, and thought it would be a blessing if she could be afflicted in the same way, in order, as she said, to purchase eternal good. And this strange desire was fulfilled, for a severe and painful malady afflicted her for three years.

Again was she removed to some place for cure, for her case was desperate. And here her patience was supernal. Yet patience under bodily torments did not give the sought-for peace. It happened that a learned ecclesiastic of noble family lived in this place, and she sought relief in confessions to him. With a rare judgment and sense, and perhaps pride and delicacy, she disliked to confess to ignorant priests. She said that

the half-learned did her more harm than good. The learned were probably more lenient to her, and more in sympathy with her, and assured her that those sins were only venial which she had supposed were mortal. But she soon was obliged to give up this confessor, since he began to confess to her, and to confess sins in comparison with which the sins she confessed were venial indeed. He not only told her of his slavery to a bad woman, but confessed a love for Theresa herself, which she of course repelled, though not with the aversion she ought to have felt. It seems that her pious talk was instrumental in effecting his deliverance from a base bondage. He soon after died, and piously, she declared; so that she considered it certain that his soul was saved.

Theresa remained three months in this place, in most grievous sufferings, for the remedy was worse than the disease. Again her father took her home, since all despaired of her recovery, her nervous system being utterly shattered, and her pains incessant by day and by night; the least touch was a torment. At last she sank into a state of insensibility from sheer exhaustion, so that she was supposed to be dying, even to be dead; and her grave was dug, and the sacrament of extreme unction was administered. She rallied from this prostration, however, and returned to the convent, though in a state of extreme weakness, and so remained for eight months. For three years she was a cripple, and could move

about only on all-fours; but she was resigned to the will of God.

It was then, amid the maladies of her body, that she found relief to her over-burdened soul in prayer. She no longer prayed with a book, mechanically and by rote, but mentally, with earnestness, and with the understanding. And she prayed directly to God Almighty, and thereby came, she says, to love Him. And with prayer came new virtues. She now ceases to speak ill of people, and persuades others to cease from all detractions, so that absent people are safe. She speaks of God as her heavenly physician, who alone could cure her. She now desires, not sickness to show her patience, but health in order to serve God better. She begins to abominate those forms and ceremonies to which so many were slavishly devoted, and which she regards as superstitious. But she has drawbacks and relapses, and is pulled back by temptations and vanities, so that she is ashamed to approach God with that familiarity which frequent prayer requires. Then she fears hell, which she thinks she deserves. She has not yet reached the placidity of a pardoned soul. Perfection is very slow to be reached, and that is what the Middle Ages required in order to exorcise the fears of divine wrath. Not, however, until these fears are exorcised can there be the liberty of the gospel or the full triumph of love.

Thus for several years Theresa passed a miserable life, since the more she prayed the more she realized her faults; and these she could not correct, because her soul was not a master, but a slave. She was drawn two ways, in opposite directions. She made good resolutions, but failed to keep them; and then there was a deluge of tears, — the feeling that she was the weakest and wickedest of all creatures. For nearly twenty years she passed through this tempestuous sea, between failings and risings, enjoying neither the sweetness of God nor the pleasures of the world. But she did not lose the courage of applying herself to mental prayer. This fortified her; this was her stronghold; this united her to God. She was persuaded if she persevered in this, whatever sin she might commit, or whatever temptation might be presented, that, in the end, her Lord would bring her safe to the port of salvation. So she prayed without ceasing. She especially insisted on the importance of mental prayer (which is, I suppose, what is called holy meditation) as a sort of treaty of friendship with her Lord. At last she feels that the Lord assists her, in His great love, and she begins to trust in Him. She declares that prayer is the gate through which the Lord bestows upon her His favors; and it is only through this that any comfort comes. Then she begins to enjoy sermons, which once tormented her, whether good or bad, so long

as God is spoken of, for she now loves Him; and she cannot hear too much of Him she loves. She delights to see her Lord's picture, since it aids her to see Him inwardly, and to feel that He is always near her, which is her constant desire.

About this time the "Confessions of Saint Augustine" were put into Theresa's hands, — one of the few immortal books which are endeared to the heart of Christians. This book was a comfort and enlightenment to her, she thinking that the Lord would forgive her, as He did those saints who had been great sinners, because He loved them. When she meditated on the conversion of Saint Augustine, — how he heard the voice in the garden, — it seemed to her that the Lord equally spoke to her, and thus she was filled with gratitude and joy. After this, her history is the enumeration of the favors which God gave her, and of the joys of prayer, which seemed to her to be the very joys of heaven. She longs more and more for her divine Spouse, to whom she is spiritually wedded. She pants for Him as the hart pants for the water-brook. She cannot be separated from Him; neither death nor hell can separate her from His love. He is infinitely precious to her, — He is chief among ten thousand. She blesses His holy name. In her exceeding joy she cries, "O Lord of my soul, O my eternal Good!" In her ecstasy she sings, —

"Absent from Thee, my Saviour dear!
I call not life this living here.
Ah, Lord! my light and living breath!
Take me, oh, take me from this death!
And burst the bars that sever me
From my true life above!
Think how I die Thy face to see,
And cannot live away from Thee,
O my Eternal Love!"

Thus she composes canticles and dries her tears, feeling that the love of God does not consist in these, but in serving Him with fidelity and devotion. She is filled with the graces of humility, and praises God that she is permitted to speak of things relating to Him. She is filled also with strength, since it is He who strengthens her. She is perpetually refreshed, since she drinks from a divine fountain. She is in a sort of trance of delight from the enjoyment of divine blessings. Her soul is elevated to rapture. She feels that her salvation, through grace, is assured. She no longer has fear of devils or of hell, since with an everlasting love she is beloved; and her lover is Christ. She has broken the bondage of the Middle Ages, and she has broken it by prayer. She is an emancipated woman, and can now afford to devote herself to practical duties. She visits the sick, she dispenses charities, she gives wise counsels; for with all her visionary piety she has good sense in the things of the world, and is as practical as she is spiritual and transcendental.

And all this in the midst of visions. I will not dwell on these visions, the weak point in her religious life, though they are visions of beauty, not of devils, of celestial spirits who came to comfort her, and who filled her soul with joy and peace.

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee."

She is bathed in the glory of her Lord, and her face shines with the radiance of heaven, with the moral beauty which the greatest of Spanish painters represents on his canvas. And she is beloved by everybody, is universally venerated for her virtues as well as for her spiritual elevation. The greatest ecclesiastical dignitaries come to see her, and encourage her, and hold converse with her, for her intellectual gifts were as remarkable as her piety. Her conversation, it appears, was charming. Her influence over the highest people was immense. She pleased, she softened, and she elevated all who knew her. She reigned in her convent as Madame de Staël reigned in her salon. She was supposed to have reached perfection; and yet she never claimed perfection, but sadly felt her imperfections, and confessed them. She was very fond of the

society of learned men, from first to last, but formed no friendships except with those whom she believed to be faithful servants of God.

At this period Theresa meditated the foundation of a new convent of the Carmelite order, to be called St. Joseph, after the name of her patron saint. But here she found great difficulty, as her plans were not generally approved by her superiors or the learned men whom she consulted. They were deemed impracticable, for she insisted that the convent should not be endowed, nor be allowed to possess property. In all the monasteries of the Middle Ages, the monks, if individually poor, might be collectively rich; and all the famous monasteries came gradually to be as well endowed as Oxford and Cambridge universities were. This proved, in the end, an evil, since the monks became lazy and luxurious and proud. They could afford to be idle; and with idleness and luxury came corruption. The austere lives of the founders of these monasteries gave them a reputation for sanctity and learning, and this brought them wealth. Rich people who had no near relatives were almost certain to leave them something in their wills. And the richer the monasteries became, the greedier their rulers were.

Theresa determined to set a new example. She did not institute any stricter rules; she was emancipated from austerities; but she resolved to make her nuns

dependent on the Lord rather than on rich people. Nor was she ambitious of founding a large convent. She thought that thirteen women together were enough. Gradually she brought the provincial of the order over to her views, and also the celebrated friar, Peter of Alcantara, the most eminent ecclesiastic in Spain. But the townspeople of Avila were full of opposition. They said it was better for Theresa to remain where she was; that there was no necessity for another convent, and that it was a very foolish thing. So great was the outcry, that the provincial finally withdrew his consent; he also deemed the revenue to be too uncertain. Then the advice of a celebrated Dominican was sought, who took eight days to consider the matter, and was at first inclined to recommend the abandonment of the project, but on further reflection he could see no harm in it, and encouraged it. So a small house was bought, for the nuns must have some shelter over their heads. The provincial changed his opinion again, and now favored the enterprise. It was a small affair, but a great thing to Theresa. Her friend the Dominican wrote letters to Rome, and the provincial offered no further objection. Moreover, she had bright visions of celestial comforters.

But the superior of her convent, not wishing the enterprise to succeed, and desiring to get her out of the way, sent Theresa to Toledo, to visit and comfort a

sick lady of rank, with whom she remained six months. Here she met many eminent men, chiefly ecclesiastics of the Dominican and Jesuit orders; and here she inspired other ladies to follow her example, among others a noble nun of her own order, who sold all she had and walked to Rome barefooted, in order to obtain leave to establish a religious house like that proposed by Theresa. At last there came letters and a brief from Rome for the establishment of the convent, and Theresa was elected prioress, in the year 1562.

But the opposition still continued, and the most learned and influential were resolved on disestablishing the house. The matter at last reached the ears of the King and council, and an order came requiring a statement as to how the monastery was to be founded. Everything was discouraging. Theresa, as usual, took refuge in prayer, and went to the Lord and said, "This house is not mine; it is established for Thee; and since there is no one to conduct the case, do Thou undertake it." From that time she considered the matter settled. Nevertheless the opposition continued, much to the astonishment of Theresa, who could not see how a prioress and twelve nuns could be injurious to the city. Finally, opposition so far ceased that it was agreed that the house should be unmolested, provided it were endowed. On this point, however, Theresa was firm, feeling that if she once began to admit revenue,

the people would not afterwards allow her to refuse it. So amid great opposition she at last took up her abode in the convent she had founded, and wanted for nothing, since alms, all unsolicited, poured in sufficient for all necessities; and the attention of the nuns was given to their duties without anxieties or obstruction, in all the dignity of voluntary poverty.

I look upon this reformation of the Carmelite order as very remarkable. The nuns did not go around among rich people supplicating their aid as was generally customary, for no convent or monastery was ever rich enough, in its own opinion. Still less did they say to rich people, "Ye are the lords and masters of mankind. We recognize your greatness and your power. Deign to give us from your abundance, not that we may live comfortably when serving the Lord, but live in luxury like you, and compete with you in the sumptuousness of our banquets and in the costliness of our furniture and our works of art, and be your companions and equals in social distinctions, and be enrolled with you as leaders of society." On the contrary they said, "We ask nothing from you. We do not wish to be rich. We prefer poverty. We would not be encumbered with useless impediments — too much camp equipage — while marching to do battle with the forces of the Devil. Christ is our Captain. He can take care of his own troops. He will not let us starve. And if

we do suffer, what of that? He suffered for our sake, shall we not suffer for his cause?"

The Convent of St. Joseph was founded in 1562, after Theresa had passed twenty-nine years in the Convent of the Incarnation. She died, 1582, at the age of sixty-seven, after twenty years of successful labors in the convent she had founded; revered by everybody; the friend of some of the most eminent men in Spain, including the celebrated Borgia, ex-Duke of Candia, and General of the Jesuits, who took the same interest in Theresa that Fénelon did in Madame Guyon. She lived to see established sixteen convents of nuns, all obeying her reformed rule, and most of them founded by her amid great difficulties and opposition. When she founded the Carmelite Convent of Toledo she had only four ducats to begin with. Some one objected to the smallness of the sum, when she replied, "Theresa and this money are indeed nothing; but God and Theresa and four ducats can accomplish anything." It was amid the fatigues incident to the founding a convent in Burgos that she sickened and died.

It was not, however, merely from her labors as a reformer and nun that Saint Theresa won her fame, but also for her writngs, which blaze with genius, although chiefly confined to her own religious experience. These consist of an account of her own life, and various letters and mystic treatises, some description of her spiritual

conflicts and ecstasies, others giving accounts of her religious labors in the founding of reformed orders and convents; while the most famous is a rapt portrayal of the progress of the soul to the highest heaven. Her own Memoirs remind one of the "Confessions of Saint Augustine," and of the "Imitation of Christ," by Thomas à Kempis. People do not read such books in these times to any extent, at least in this country, but they have ever been highly valued on the continent of Europe. The biographers of Saint Theresa have been numerous, some of them very distinguished, like Ribera, Yepez, and Sainte Marie. Bossuet, while he condemned Madame Guyon for the same mystical piety which marked Saint Theresa, still bowed down to the authority of the writings of the saint, while Fleury quotes them with the decrees of the Council of Trent.

But Saint Theresa ever was submissive to the authority of the Pope and of her spiritual directors. She would not have been canonized by Gregory XV. had she not been. So long as priests and nuns have been submissive to the authority of the Church, the Church has been lenient to their opinions. Until the Reformation, there was great practical freedom of opinion in the Catholic Church. Nor was the Church of the sixteenth century able to see the logical tendency of the mysticism of Saint Theresa, since it was not coupled with rebellion against spiritual despotism. It was not

until the logical and dogmatic intellect of Bossuet discerned the spiritual independence of the Jansenists and Quietists, that persecution began against them. Had Saint Theresa lived a century later, she would probably have shared the fate of Madame Guyon, whom she resembled more closely than any other woman that I have read of,—in her social position, in her practical intellect, despite the visions of a dreamy piety, in her passionate love of the Saviour, in her method of prayer, in her spiritual conflicts, in the benevolence which marked all her relations with the world, in the divine charity which breathed through all her words, and in the triumph of love over all the fears inspired by a gloomy theology and a superstitious priesthood. Both of these eminent women were poets of no ordinary merit; both enjoyed the friendship of the most eminent men of their age; both craved the society of the learned; both were of high birth and beautiful in their youth, and fitted to adorn society by their brilliant talk as well as graceful manners; both were amiable and sought to please, and loved distinction and appreciation; both were Catholics, yet permeated with the spirit of Protestantism, so far as religion is made a matter between God and the individual soul, and marked by internal communion with the Deity rather than by outward acts of prescribed forms; both had confessors, and yet both maintained the freedom of their minds and souls, and

knew of no binding authority but that divine voice which appealed to their conscience and heart, and that divine word which is written in the Scriptures. After the love of God had subdued their hearts, we read but little of penances, or self-expiations, or forms of worship, or church ceremonies, or priestly rigors, or any of the slaveries and formalities which bound ordinary people. Their piety was mystical, sometimes visionary, and not always intelligible, but deep, sincere, and lofty. Of the two women, I think Saint Theresa was the more remarkable, and had the most originality. Madame Guyon seems to have borrowed much from her, especially in her methods of prayer.

The influence of Saint Theresa's life and writings has been eminent and marked, not only in the Catholic but in the Protestant Church. If not direct, it has been indirect. She had that active, ardent nature which sets at defiance a formal piety, and became an example to noble women in a more enlightened, if less poetic, age. She was the precursor of a Madame de Chantal, of a Francis de Sales, of a Mère Angelique. The learned and saintly Port Royalists, in many respects, were her disciples. We even see a resemblance to her spiritual exercises in the "Thoughts" of Pascal. We see her mystical love of the Saviour in the poetry of Cowper and Watts and Wesley. The same sentiments she uttered appear even in the devotional works of Jeremy

Taylor and Jonathan Edwards. The Protestant theology of the last century was in harmony with hers in its essential features. In the "Pilgrim's Progress" of Bunyan we have no more graphic pictures of the sense of sin, the justice of its punishment, and the power by which it is broken, than are to be found in the writings of this saintly woman. In no Protestant hymnals do we find a warmer desire for a spiritual union with the Author of our salvation; in none do we see the aspiring soul seeking to climb to the regions of eternal love more than in her exultant melodies.

> "For uncreated charms I burn,
> Oppressed by slavish fears no more;
> For *One* in whom I may discern,
> E'en when He frowns, a sweetness I adore."

That remarkable work of Fénelon in which he defends Madame Guyon, called "Maxims of the Saints," would equally apply to Saint Theresa, in fact to all those who have been distinguished for an inward life, from Saint Augustine to Richard Baxter, — for unselfish love, resignation to the divine will, self-renunciation, meditation too deep for words, and union with Christ, as represented by the figure of the bride and bridegroom. This is Christianity, as it has appeared in all ages, both among Catholic and Protestant saints. It may seem to some visionary, to others unreasonable, and to others again repulsive. But this has been the life

and joy of those whom the Church has honored and commended. It has raised them above the despair of Paganism and the superstitions of the Middle Ages. It is the love which casteth out fear, producing in the harassed soul repose and rest amid the doubts and disappointments of life. It is not inspired by duty; it does not rest on philanthropy; it is not the religion of humanity. It is a gift bestowed by the Father of Lights, and will be, to remotest ages, the most precious boon which He bestows on those who seek His guidance.

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MADAME DE MAINTENON

THE POLITICAL WOMAN.

A. D. 1635–1719.

MADAME DE MAINTENON.

THE POLITICAL WOMAN.

I PRESENT Madame de Maintenon as one of those great women who have exerted a powerful influence on the political destinies of a nation, since she was the life of the French monarchy for more than thirty years during the reign of Louis XIV. In the earlier part of her career she was a queen of society; but her social triumphs pale before the lustre of that power which she exercised as the wife of the greatest monarch of the age, — so far as splendor and magnificence can make a monarch great. No woman in modern times ever rose so high from a humble position, with the exception of Catherine I., wife of Peter the Great. She was not born a duchess, like some of those brilliant women who shed glory around the absolute throne of the proudest monarch of his century, but rose to her magnificent position by pure merit, — her graces, her virtues, and her abilities having won the respect and admiration of the overlauded but sagacious King of France. And

yet she was well born, so far as blood is concerned, since the Protestant family of D'Aubigné — to which she belonged — was one of the oldest in the kingdom. Her father, however, was a man of reckless extravagance and infamous habits, and committed follies and crimes which caused him to be imprisoned in Bordeaux. While in prison he compromised the character of the daughter of his jailer, and by her means escaped to America. He returned, and was again arrested. His wife followed him to his cell; and it was in this cell that the subject of this lecture was born (1635). Subsequently her miserable father obtained his release, sailed with his family to Martinique, and died there in extreme poverty. His wife, heart-broken, returned to France, and got her living by her needle, until she too, worn out by poverty and misfortune, died, leaving her daughter to strive, as she had striven, with a cold and heartless world.

This daughter became at first a humble dependent on one of her rich relatives; and "the future wife of Louis XIV. could be seen on a morning assisting the coachmen to groom the horses, or following a flock of turkeys, with her breakfast in a basket." But she was beautiful and bright, and panted, like most ambitious girls, for an entrance into what is called "society." Society at that time in France was brilliant, intellectual, and wicked. "There was the blending

of calculating interest and religious asceticism," when women of the world, after having exhausted its pleasures, retired to cloisters, and "sacrificed their natural affections to family pride." It was an age of intellectual idlers, when men and women, having nothing to do, spent their time in salons, and learned the art of conversation, which was followed by the art of letter-writing.

To reach the salons of semi-literary and semi-fashionable people, where rank and wealth were balanced by wit, became the desire of the young Mademoiselle d'Aubigné. Her entrance into society was effected in a curious way. At that time there lived in Paris (about the year 1650) a man whose house was the centre of gay and literary people, — those who did not like the stiffness of the court or the pedantries of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. His name was Scarron, — a popular and ribald poet, a comic dramatist, a buffoon, a sort of Rabelais, whose inexhaustible wit was the admiration of the city. He belonged to a good family, and originally was a man of means. His uncle had been a bishop and his father a member of the Parliament of Paris. But he had wasted his substance in riotous living, and was reduced to a small pension from the Government. His profession was originally that of a priest, and he continued through life to wear the ecclesiastical garb. He was full of maladies and miseries, and

his only relief was in society. In spite of his poverty he contrived to give suppers — they would now be called dinners — which were exceedingly attractive. To his house came the noted characters of the day, — Mademoiselle de Scudéri the novelist, Marigny the song-writer, Hénault the translator of Lucretius, De Grammont the pet of the court, Chatillon, the duchesses de la Salière and De Sévigné, even Ninon de L'Enclos; all bright and fashionable people, whose wit and raillery were the admiration of the city.

It so happened that to a reception of the Abbé Scarron was brought one day the young lady destined to play so important a part in the history of her country. But her dress was too short, which so mortified her in the splendid circle to which she was introduced that she burst into tears, and Scarron was obliged to exert all his tact to comfort her. Yet she made a good impression, since she was beautiful and witty; and a letter which she wrote to a friend soon after, which letter Scarron happened to see, was so remarkable, that the crippled dramatist determined to make her his wife, — she only sixteen, he forty-two; so infirm that he could not walk, and so poor that the guests frequently furnished the dishes for the common entertainments. And with all these physical defects (for his body was bent nearly double), and notwithstanding that he was one of the coarsest and profanest

men of that ungodly age, she accepted him. What price will not an aspiring woman pay for social position! — for even a marriage with Scarron was to her a step in the ladder of social elevation.

Did she love this bloated and crippled sensualist, or was she carried away by admiration of his brilliant conversation, or was she actuated by a far-reaching policy? I look upon her as a born female Jesuit, believing in the principle that the end justifies the means. Nor is such jesuitism incompatible with pleasing manners, amiability of temper, and great intellectual radiance; it equally marked, I can fancy, Jezabel, Cleopatra, and Catherine de Médicis. Moreover, in France it has long been the custom for poor girls to seek eligible matches without reference to love.

It does not seem that this hideous marriage provoked scandal. In fact, it made the fortune of Mademoiselle d'Aubigné. She now presided at entertainments which were the gossip of the city, and to which stupid dukes aspired in vain; for Scarron would never have a dull man at his table, not even if he were loaded with diamonds and could trace his pedigree to the paladins of Charlemagne. But by presiding at parties made up of the élite of the fashionable and cultivated society of Paris, this ambitious woman became acquainted with those who had influence at court; so that when her husband died, and she was cut off

from his life-pension and reduced to poverty, she was recommended to Madame de Montespan, the King's mistress, as the governess of her children. It was a judicious appointment. Madame Scarron was then thirty-four, in the pride of womanly grace and dignity, with rare intellectual gifts and accomplishments. There is no education more effective than that acquired by constant intercourse with learned and witty people. Even the dinner-table is no bad school for one naturally bright and amiable. There is more to be learned from conversation than from books. The living voice is a great educator.

Madame Scarron, on the death of her husband, was already a queen of society. As the governess of Montespan's children, — which was a great position, since it introduced her to the notice of the King himself, the fountain of all honor and promotion, — her habits of life were somewhat changed. Life became more sombre by the irksome duties of educating unruly children, and the forced retirement to which she was necessarily subjected. She could have lived without this preferment, since the pension of her husband was restored to her, and could have made her salon the resort of the best society. But she had deeper designs. Not to be the queen of a fashionable circle did she now aspire, but to be the leader of a court.

But this aim she was obliged to hide. It could only

be compassed by transcendent tact, prudence, patience, and good sense, all of which qualities she possessed in an eminent degree. It was necessary to gain the confidence of an imperious and jealous mistress — which was only to be done by the most humble assiduities — before she could undermine her in the affections of the King. She had also to gain his respect and admiration without allowing any improper intimacy. She had to disarm jealousy and win confidence; to be as humble in address as she was elegant in manners, and win a selfish man from pleasure by the richness of her conversation and the severity of her own morals.

Little by little she began to exercise a great influence over the mind of the King when he was becoming wearied of the railleries of his exacting favorite, and when some of the delusions of life were beginning to be dispelled. He then found great solace and enjoyment in the society of Madame Scarron, whom he enriched, enabling her to purchase the estate of Maintenon and to assume its name. She soothed his temper, softened his resentments, and directed his attention to a new field of thought and reflection. She was just the opposite of Montespan in almost everything. The former won by the solid attainments of the mind; the latter by her sensual charms. The one talked on literature, art, and religious subjects; the other on fêtes, balls, reviews, and the glories of the court and

its innumerable scandals. Maintenon reminded the King of his duties without sermonizing or moralizing, but with the insidious flattery of a devout worshipper of his genius and power; Montespan directed his mind to pleasures which had lost their charm. Maintenon was always amiable and sympathetic; Montespan provoked the King by her resentments, her imperious exactions, her ungovernable fits of temper, her haughty sarcasm. Maintenon was calm, modest, self-possessed, judicious, wise; Montespan was passionate, extravagant, unreasonable. Maintenon always appealed to the higher nature of the King; Montespan to the lower. The one was a sincere friend, dissuading from folly; the other an exacting lover, demanding perpetually new favors, to the injury of the kingdom and the subversion of the King's dignity of character. The former ruled through the reason; the latter through the passions. Maintenon was irreproachable in her morals, preserved her self-respect, and tolerated no improper advances, having no great temptations to subdue, steadily adhering to that policy which she knew would in time make her society indispensable; Montespan was content to be simply mistress, with no forecast of the future, and with but little regard to the interests or honor of her lord. Maintenon became more attractive every day from the variety of her intellectual gifts and her unwearied efforts to please and



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instruct; Montespan, although a bright woman, amidst the glories of a dazzling court, at last wearied, disgusted and repelled. And yet the woman who gradually supplanted Madame de Montespan by superior radiance of mind and soul openly remained her friend, through all her waning influence, and pretended to come to her rescue.

The friendship of the King for Madame de Maintenon began as early as 1672; and during the twelve years she was the governess of Montespan's children she remained discreet and dignified. "I dismiss him," said she, "always despairing, never repulsed." What a transcendent actress! What astonishing tact! What shrewdness blended with self-control! She conformed herself to his tastes and notions. At the supper-tables of her palsied husband she had been gay, unstilted, and simple; but with the King she became formal, prudish, ceremonious, fond of etiquette, and pharisaical in her religious life. She discreetly ruled her royal lover in the name of virtue and piety. In 1675 the King created her Marquise de Maintenon.

On the disgrace of Madame de Montespan, when the King was forty-six, Madame de Maintenon still remained at court, having a conspicuous office in the royal household as mistress of the robes to the Dauphiness, so that her nearness to the King created no scandal. She was now a stately woman, with

sparkling black eyes, a fine complexion, beautiful teeth, and exceedingly graceful manners. The King could not now live without her, for he needed a counsellor whom he could trust. It must be borne in mind that the great Colbert, on whose shoulders had been laid the burdens of the monarchy, had recently died. On the death of the Queen (1685), Louis made Madame de Maintenon his wife, she being about fifty and he forty-seven.

This private and secret marriage was never openly divulged during the life of the King, although generally surmised. This placed Madame de Maintenon — for she went by this title — in a false position. To say the least, it was humiliating amid all the splendors to which she was raised; for if she were a lawful wife, she was not a queen. Some, perhaps, supposed she was in the position of those favorites whose fate, again and again, has been to fall.

One thing is certain, — the King would have made her his mistress years before; but to this she would never consent. She was too politic, too ambitious, too discreet, to make that immense mistake. Yet after the dismissal of Montespan she seemed to be such, until she had with transcendent art and tact attained her end. It is a flaw in her character that she was willing so long to be aspersed; showing that power was dearer to her than reputation. Bossuet, when consulted by

the King as to his intended marriage, approved of it only on the ground that it was better to make a foolish marriage than violate the seventh commandment. La Chaise, the Jesuit confessor, who travelled in a coach and six, recommended it, because Madame de Maintenon was his tool. But Louvois felt the impropriety as well as Fénelon, and advised the King not thus to commit himself. The Dauphin was furious. The Archbishop of Paris simply did his duty in performing the ceremony.

Doubtless reasons of State imperatively demanded that the marriage should not openly be proclaimed, and still more that the widow of Scarron should not be made the Queen of France. Louis was too much of a politician, and too proud a man, to make this concession. Had he raised his unacknowledged wife to the throne, it would have resulted in political complications which would have embarrassed his whole subsequent reign. He dared not do this. He could not thus scandalize all Europe, and defy all the precedents of France. And no one knew this better than Madame de Maintenon herself. She appeared to be satisfied if she could henceforth live in virtuous relations. Her religious scruples are to be respected. It is wonderful that she gained as much as she did in that proud, cynical, and worldly court, and from the proudest monarch in the world. But Louis was not happy

without her, — a proof of his respect and love. At the age of forty-seven he needed the counsels of a wife amid his increasing embarrassments. He was already wearied, sickened, and disgusted: he now wanted repose, friendship, and fidelity. He certainly was guilty of no error in marrying one of the most gifted women of his kingdom, — perhaps the most accomplished woman of the age, interesting and even beautiful at fifty. She was then in the perfection of mental and moral fascinations. He made no other sacrifice than of his pride. His fidelity to his wife, and his constant devotion to her until he died, proved the sincerity and depth of his attachment; and her marvellous influence over him was on the whole good, with the exception of her religious intolerance.

As the wife of Louis XIV. the power of Madame de Maintenon became almost unbounded. Her ambition was gratified, and her end was accomplished. She was the dispenser of court favors, the arbiter of fortunes, the real ruler of the land. Her reign was political as well as social. She sat in the cabinet of the King, and gave her opinions on State matters whenever she was asked. Her counsels were so wise that they generally prevailed. No woman before or after her ever exerted so great an influence on the fortunes of a kingdom as did the widow of the poet Scarron. The court which she adorned and ruled was not so brilliant

as it had been under Madame de Montespan, but was still magnificent. She made it more decorous, though probably more dull. She was opposed to all foolish expenditures. She discouraged the endless fêtes and balls and masquerades which made her predecessor so popular. But still Versailles glittered with unparalleled wonders: the fountains played; grand equipages crowded the park; the courtiers blazed in jewels and velvets and satins; the salons were filled with all who were illustrious in France; princes, nobles, ambassadors, generals, statesmen, and ministers rivalled one another in the gorgeousness of their dresses; women of rank and beauty displayed their graces in the Salon de Venus.

The articles of luxury and taste that were collected in the countless rooms of that vast palace almost exceeded belief. And all these blazing rooms were filled, even to the attic, with aristocratic servitors, who poured out perpetual incense to the object of their united idolatry, who sat on almost an Olympian throne. Never was a monarch served by such idolaters. "Bossuet and Fénelon taught his children; Bourdaloue and Massillon adorned his chapel; La Chaise and Le Tellier directed his conscience; Boileau and Molière sharpened his wit; La Rochefoucauld cultivated his taste; La Fontaine wrote his epigrams; Racine chronicled his wars; De Turenne commanded his armies;

Fouquet and Colbert arranged his finances; Molé and D'Aguesseau pronounced his judgments; Louvois laid out his campaigns; Vauban fortified his citadels; Riquet dug his canals; Mansard constructed his palaces; Poussin decorated his chambers; Le Brun painted his ceilings; Le Notre laid out his grounds; Girardon sculptured his fountains; Montespan arranged his fêtes; while La Vallière, La Fayette, and Sévigné — all queens of beauty — displayed their graces in the Salon de Venus." What an array of great men and brilliant women to reflect the splendors of an absolute throne! Never was there such an éclat about a court; it was one of the wonders of the age.

And Louis never lost his taste for this outward grandeur. He was ceremonious and exacting to the end. He never lost the sense of his own omnipotence. In his latter days he was sad and dejected, but never exhibited his weakness among his worshippers. He was always dignified and self-possessed. He loved pomp as much as Michael Angelo loved art. Even in his bitterest reverses he still maintained the air of the "Grand Monarque." Says Henri Martin: —

"Etiquette, without accepting the extravagant restraints which the court of France endured, and which French genius would not support, assumed an unknown extension, proportioned to the increase of royal splendor. It was adapted to serve the monarchy at the expense of the aristoc-

racy, and tended to make functions prevail over birth. The great dukes and peers were multiplied in order to reduce their importance, and the King gave the marshals precedence over them. The court was a scientific and complicated machine which Louis guided with sovereign skill. At all hours, in all places, in the most trifling circumstances of life, he was always king. His affability never contradicted itself; he expressed interest and kindliness to all; he showed himself indulgent to errors that could not be repaired; his majesty was tempered by a grave familiarity; and he wholly refrained from those pointed and ironical speeches which so cruelly wound when falling from the lips of a man that none can answer. He taught all, by his example, the most exquisite courtesy to women. Manners acquired unequalled elegance. The fêtes exceeded everything which romance had dreamed, in which the fairy splendors that wearied the eye were blended with the noblest pleasures of the intellect. But whether appearing in mythological ballets, or riding in tournaments in the armor of the heroes of antiquity, or presiding at plays and banquets in his ordinary apparel with his thick flowing hair, his loose surtout blazing with gold and silver, and his profusion of ribbons and plumes, always his air and port had something unique, — always he was the first among all. His whole life was like a work of art; and the rôle was admirably played, because he played it conscientiously."

The King was not only sacred, but he was supposed to have different blood in his veins from other men.

His person was inviolable. He reigned, it was universally supposed, by divine right. He was a divinely commissioned personage, like Saul and David. He did not reign because he was able or powerful or wealthy, because he was a statesman or a general, but because he had a right to reign which no one disputed. This adoration of royalty was not only universal, but it was deeply seated in the minds of men, and marked strongly all the courtiers and generals and bishops and poets who surrounded the throne of Louis, — Bossuet and Fénelon, as well as Colbert and Louvois; Racine and Molière, as well as Condé and Turenne. Especially the nobility of the realm looked up to the king as the source and centre of their own honors and privileges. Even the people were proud to recognize in him a sort of divinity, and all persons stood awe-struck in the presence of royalty. All this reverence was based on ideas which have ever moved the world, — such as sustained popes in the Middle Ages, and emperors in ancient Rome, and patriarchal rule among early Oriental peoples. Religion, as well as law and patriotism, invested monarchs with this sacred and inalienable authority, never greater than when Louis XIV. began to reign.

But with all his grandeur Louis XIV. did not know how to avail himself of the advantages which fortune and accident placed in his way. He was simply mag-

nificent, like Xerxes, — like a man who had entered into a vast inheritance which he did not know what to do with. He had no profound views of statesmanship, like Augustus or Tiberius. He had no conception of what the true greatness of a country consisted in. Hence his vast treasures were spent in useless wars, silly pomps, and inglorious pleasures. His grand court became the scene of cabals and rivalries, scandals and follies. His wars, from which he expected glory, ended only in shame; his great generals passed away without any to take their place; his people, instead of being enriched by a development of national resources, became poor and discontented; while his persecutions decimated his subjects and sowed the seeds of future calamities. Even the learned men who shed lustre around his throne prostituted their talents to nurse his egotism, and did but little to elevate the national character. Neither Pascal with his intense hostility to spiritual despotism, nor Racine with the severe taste which marked the classic authors of Greece and Rome, nor Fénelon with his patriotic enthusiasm and clear perception of the moral strength of empires, dared to give full scope to his genius, but all were obliged to veil their sentiments in vague panegyrics of ancient heroes. At the close of the seventeenth century the great intellectual lights had disappeared under the withering influences of despotism, — as in ancient Rome under

the emperors all manly independence had fled, — and literature went through an eclipse. That absorbing egotism which made Louis XIV. jealous of the fame of Condé and Luxembourg, or fearful of the talents of Louvois and Colbert, or suspicious of the influence of Racine and Fénelon, also led him to degrade his nobility by menial offices, and institute in his court a burdensome formality.

In spite of his great abilities, no monarch ever reaped a severer penalty for his misgovernment than did Louis. Like Solomon, he lived long enough to see the bursting of all the bubbles which had floated before his intoxicated brain. All his delusions were dispelled; he was oppressed with superstitious fears; he was weary of the very pleasures of which he once was fondest; he saw before him a gulf of national disasters; he was obliged to melt up the medallions which commemorated his victories, to furnish bread for starving soldiers; he lost the provinces he had seized; he saw the successive defeat of all his marshals and the annihilation of his veteran armies; he was deprived of his children and grandchildren by the most dreadful malady known to that generation; a feeble infant was the heir of his dominions; he saw nothing before him but national disgrace; he found no counsellors whom he could trust, no friends to whom he could pour out his sorrows; the infirmities of age oppressed his body; the agonies of remorse dis-

turbed his soul; the fear of hell became the foundation of his religion, for he must have felt that he had a fearful reckoning with the King of kings.

Such was the man to whom the best days of Madame de Maintenon were devoted; and she shared his confidence to the last. She did all she could to alleviate his sorrows, for a more miserable man than Louis XIV. during the last twenty years of his life never was seated on a throne. Well might his wife exclaim, "Save those who occupy the highest places, I know of none more unhappy than those who envy them." This great woman attempted to make her husband a religious man, and succeeded so far as a rigid regard to formalities and technical observances can make a man religious.

It may be asked how this formal and proper woman was enabled to exert upon the King so great an influence; for she was the real ruler of the land. No woman ever ruled with more absolute sway, from Queen Esther to Madame de Pompadour, than did the widow of the profane and crippled Scarron. It cannot be doubted that she exerted this influence by mere moral and intellectual force,— the power of physical beauty retreating before the superior radiance of wisdom and virtue. La Vallière had wearied and Montespan had disgusted even a sensual king, with all their remarkable attractions; but Maintenon, by her prudence, her tact, her

wisdom, and her friendship, retained the empire she had won, — thus teaching the immortal lesson that nothing but respect constitutes a sure foundation for love, or can hold the heart of a selfish man amid the changes of life. Whatever the promises made emphatic by passion, whatever the presents or favors given as tokens of everlasting ties, whatever the raptures consecrating the endearments of a plighted troth, whatever the admiration called out by the scintillations of genius, whatever the gratitude arising from benefits bestowed in sympathy, all will vanish in the heart of a man unless confirmed by qualities which extort esteem, — the most impressive truth that can be presented to the mind of woman; her encouragement if good, her sentence to misery if bad, so far as her hopes centre around an earthly idol.

Now, Madame de Maintenon, whatever her defects, her pharisaism, her cunning, her ambition, and her narrow religious intolerance, was still, it would seem, always respected, not only by the King himself, — a great discerner of character, — but by the court which she controlled, and even by that gay circle of wits who met around the supper-tables of her first husband. The breath of scandal never tarnished her reputation; she was admired by priests as well as by nobles. From this fact, which is well attested, we infer that she acted with transcendent discretion as the governess of the

Duke of Maine, even when brought into the most intimate relations with the King; and that when reigning at the court after the death of the Queen, she must have been supposed to have a right to all the attentions which she received from Louis XIV. And what is very remarkable about this woman is, that she should so easily have supplanted Madame de Montespan in the full blaze of her dazzling beauty, when the King was in the maturity of his power and in all the pride of external circumstance,—she, born a Protestant, converted to Catholicism in her youth under protest, poor, dependent, a governess, the widow of a vulgar buffoon, and with antecedents which must have stung to the quick so proud a man as was Louis XIV. With his severe taste, his experience, his discernment, with all the cynical and hostile influences of a proud and worldly court, and after a long and searching intimacy, it is hard to believe that he could have loved and honored her to his death if she had not been worthy of his esteem. And when we remember that for nearly forty years she escaped the scandals which made those times unique in infamy, we are forced to concede that on the whole she must have been a good woman. To retain such unbounded power for over thirty years is a very remarkable thing to do.

Madame de Maintenon, however, though wise and virtuous, made many grave mistakes, as she had many

defects of character. Great as she was, she has to answer for political crimes into which, from her narrow religious prejudices, she led the King.

The most noticeable feature in the influence which Madame de Maintenon exercised on the King was in inciting a spirit of religious intolerance. And this appeared even long before Madame de Montespan had lost her ascendency. For ten years before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes there had been continual persecution of the Protestants in France, on the ground that they were heretics, though not rebels. And the same persecuting spirit was displayed in reference to the Jansenists, who were Catholics, and whose only sin was intellectual boldness. Anybody who thought differently from the monarch incurred the royal displeasure. Intellectual freedom and honesty were the real reasons of the disgrace of Racine and Fénelon. For the King was a bigot in religion as well as a despot on a throne. He fancied that he was very pious. He was regular in all his religious duties. He was an earnest and conscientious adherent to all the doctrines of the Catholic Church. In his judgment, a departure from those doctrines should be severely punished. He was as sincere as Torquemada, or Alva, or Saint Dominic. His wife encouraged this bigotry, and even stimulated his resentments toward those who differed from him.

At last, in 1685, the fatal blow was struck which decimated the subjects of an irresponsible king. The glorious edict which Henry IV. had granted, and which even Richelieu and Mazarin had respected, was repealed. There was no political necessity for the crime. It sprang from unalloyed religious intolerance; and it was as suicidal as it was uncalled for and cruel. It was an immense political blunder, which no enlightened monarch would ever have committed, and which none but a cold and narrow woman would ever have encouraged. There was no excuse or palliation for this abominable persecution any more than there was for the burning of John Huss. It had not even as much to justify it as had the slaughter of St. Bartholomew, for the Huguenots were politically hostile and dangerous. It was an act of wanton cruelty incited by religious bigotry. I wonder how a woman so kind-hearted, so intelligent, and so politic as Madame de Maintenon doubtless was, could have encouraged the King to a measure which undermined his popularity, which cut the sinews of natural strength, and raised up implacable enemies in every Protestant country. I can palliate her detestable bigotry only on the ground that she was the slave of an order of men who have ever proved themselves to be the inveterate foes of human freedom, and who marked their footsteps, wherever they went, by a trail of blood. Louis was equally their blinded tool.

The Order — the "Society of Jesus" — was created to extirpate heresy, and in this instance it was carried out to the bitter end. The persecution of the Protestants under Louis XIV. was the most cruel and successful of all known persecutions in ancient or modern times. It annihilated the Protestants, so far as there were any left openly to defend their cause. It drove out of France from two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand of her best people, and executed or confined to the galleys as many more. They died like sheep led to the slaughter; they died not with arms, but Bibles, in their hands. I have already presented some details of that inglorious persecution in my lecture on Louis XIV., and will not repeat what I there said. It was deemed by Madame de Maintenon a means of grace to the King, — for in her way she always sought his conversion. And when the bloody edict went forth for the slaughter of the best people in the land, she wrote that "the King was now beginning to think seriously of his salvation. If God preserve him, there will be no longer but one religion in the kingdom." This foul stain on her character did not proceed from cruelty of disposition, but from mistaken zeal. What a contrast her conduct was to the policy of Elizabeth! Yet she was no worse than Le Tellier, La Chaise, and other fanatics. Religious intolerance was one of the features of the age and of the Roman Catholic Church.

But religious bigotry is eternally odious to enlightened reason. No matter how interesting a man or woman may be in most respects, if stained with cruel intolerance in religious opinions, he or she will be repulsive. It left an indelible stain on the character of the most brilliant and gifted woman of her times, and makes us forget her many virtues. With all her excellences, she goes down in history as a cold and intolerant woman whom we cannot love. We cannot forget that in a great degree through her influence the Edict of Nantes was repealed.

The persecution of the Protestants, however, partially reveals the narrow intolerance of Madame de Maintenon. She sided but with those whose influence was directed to the support of the recognized dogmas of the Church in their connection with the absolute rule of kings. The interests of Catholic institutions have ever been identical with absolutism. Bossuet, the ablest theologian and churchman which the Catholic Church produced in the seventeenth century, gave the whole force of his vast intellect to uphold an unlimited royal authority. He saw in the bold philosophical speculations of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Locke an insidious undermining of the doctrines of the Church, an intellectual freedom whose logical result would be fatal alike to Church and State. His eagle eye penetrated to the core of every system of human

thought. He saw the logical and necessary results of every theory which Pantheists, or Rationalists, or Quietists, or Jansenists advanced. Whatever did not support the dogmas of mediæval and patriotic theologians, such as the Papal Church indorsed, was regarded by him with suspicion and aversion. Every theory or speculation which tended to emancipate the mind, or weaken the authority of the Church, or undermine an absolute throne, was treated by him with dogmatic intolerance and persistent hatred. He made war alike on the philosophers, the Jansenists, and the Quietists, whether they remained in the ranks of the Church or not. It was the dangerous consequences of these speculations pushed to their logical result which he feared and detested, and which no other eye than his was able to perceive.

Bossuet communicated his spirit to Madame de Maintenon and to the King, who were both under his influence as to the treatment of religious or philosophical questions. Louis and his wife were both devout supporters of orthodoxy, — that is, the received doctrines of the Church, — partly from conservative tendencies, and partly from the connection of established religious institutions with absolutism in government. Whatever was established, was supported because it was established. They would suffer no innovation, not even in philosophy. Anything progressive was

abhorred as much as anything destructive. When Fénelon said, "I love my family better than myself, my country better than my family, and the human race better than my country," he gave utterance to a sentiment which was revolutionary in its tendency. When he declared in his "Telemaque" what were the duties of kings, — that they reigned for the benefit of their subjects rather than for themselves, — he undermined the throne which he openly supported. It was the liberal spirit which animated Fénelon, as well as the innovations to which his opinions logically led, which arrayed against him the king who admired him, the woman who had supported him, and the bishop who was jealous of him. Although he charmed everybody with whom he associated by the angelic sweetness of his disposition, his refined courtesies of manner, and his sparkling but inoffensive wit, — a born courtier as well as philosopher, the most interesting and accomplished man of his generation, — still, neither Bossuet nor Madame de Maintenon nor the King could tolerate his teachings, so pregnant were they with innovations; and he was exiled to his bishopric. Madame de Maintenon, who once delighted in Fénelon, learned to detest him as much as Bossuet did, when the logical tendency of his writings was seen. She would rivet the chains of slavery on the human intellect as well as on the devotees of Rome or the courtiers of the King; while

Fénelon would have emancipated the race itself in the fervor and sincerity of his boundless love.

This hostility to Fénelon was not caused entirely by the political improvements he would have introduced, but because his all-embracing toleration sought to protect the sentimental pantheism which Madame Guyon inculcated in her maxims of disinterested love and voluntary passivity of the soul towards God, in opposition to that rationalistic pantheism which Spinoza defended, and into which he had inexorably pushed with unexampled logic the deductions of Malebranche. The men who finally overturned the fabric of despotism which Richelieu constructed were the philosophers. The clear but narrow intellect of the King and his wife instinctively saw in them the natural enemies of the throne; and hence they were frowned upon, if not openly persecuted.

We are forced therefore to admit that the intolerance of Madame de Maintenon, repulsive as it was, arose in part, like the intolerance of Bossuet, from zeal to uphold the institutions and opinions on which the Church and the throne were equally based. The Jesuits would call such a woman a nursing mother of the Church, a protector of the cause of orthodoxy, the watchful guardian of the royal interests and those of all established institutions. Any ultra conservatism, logically carried out, would land any person on the ground where she stood.

But while Madame de Maintenon was a foe to everything like heresy, or opposition to the Catholic Church, or true intellectual freedom, she was the friend of education. She was the founder of the celebrated School of St. Cyr, where three hundred young ladies, daughters of impoverished nobles, were educated gratuitously. She ever took the greatest interest in this school, and devoted to it all the time her numerous engagements would permit. She visited it every day, and was really its president and director. There was never a better school for aristocratic girls in a Catholic country. She directed their studies and superintended their manners, and brought to bear on their culture her own vast experience. If Bossuet was a born priest, she was a born teacher. It was for the amusement of the girls that Racine was induced by her to write one of his best dramas, — "Queen Esther," a sort of religious tragedy in the severest taste, which was performed by the girls in the presence of the most distinguished people of the court.

Madame de Maintenon exerted her vast influence in favor of morality and learning. She rewarded genius and scholarship. She was the patron of those distinguished men who rendered important services to France, whether statesmen, divines, generals, or scholars. She sought to bring to the royal notice eminent merit in every department of life within the ranks of ortho-

doxy. A poet, or painter, or orator, who gave remarkable promise, was sure of her kindness; and there were many such. For the world is full at all times of remarkable young men and women, but there are very few remarkable men at the age of fifty.

And her influence on the court was equally good. She discouraged levities, gossip, and dissipation. If the palace was not so gay as during the reign of Madame de Montespan, it was more decorous and more intellectual. It became fashionable to go to church, and to praise good sermons and read books of casuistry. "Tartuffe grew pale before Escobar." Bossuet and Bourdaloue were equal oracles with Molière and Racine. Great preachers were all the fashion. The court became very decorous, if it was hypocritical. The King interested himself in theological discussions, and became as austere as formerly he was gay and merry. He regretted his wars and his palace-building; for both were discouraged by Madame de Maintenon, who perceived that they impoverished the nation. She undertook the mighty task of reforming the court itself, as well as the morals of the King; and she partially succeeded. The proud Nebuchadnezzar whom she served was at last made to confess that there was a God to whom he was personally responsible; and he was encouraged to bear with dignity those sad reverses which humiliated his pride, and drank without complaint the



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dregs of that bitter cup which retributive justice held out in mercy before he died. It was his wife who revealed the deceitfulness, the hypocrisy, the treachery, and the heartlessness of that generation of vipers which he had trusted and enriched. She was more than the guardian of his interests; she was his faithful friend, who dissuaded him from follies. So that outwardly Louis XIV. became a religious man, and could perhaps have preached a sermon on the vanity of a worldly life, — that whatever is born in vanity must end in vanity.

It is greatly to the credit of Madame de Maintenon that she was interested in whatever tended to improve the morals of the people or to develop the intellect. She was one of those strong-minded women who are impressible by grand sentiments. She would have admired Madame de Staël or Madame Roland, — not their opinions, but their characters. Politics was perhaps the most interesting subject to her, as it has ever been to very cultivated women in France; and it was with the details of cabinets and military enterprises that she was most familiar. It was this political knowledge which made her so wise a counsellor and so necessary a companion to the King. But her reign was nevertheless a usurpation. She triumphed in consequence of the weakness of her husband more than by her own strength; and the nation never forgave

her. She outraged the honor of the King, and detracted from the dignity of the royal station. Louis XIV. certainly had the moral right to marry her, as a nobleman may espouse a servant-girl; but it was a *faux-pas* which the proud idolaters of rank could not excuse.

And for this usurpation Madame de Maintenon paid no inconsiderable a penalty. She was insulted by the royal family to the day of her death. The Dauphin would not visit her, even when the King led him to the door of her apartments. The courtiers mocked her behind her back. Her rivals thrust upon her their envenomed libels. Even Racine once so far forgot himself as to allude in her presence to the miserable farces of the poet Scarron, — an unpremeditated and careless insult which she never forgot or forgave. Moreover, in all her grandeur she was doomed to the most exhaustive formalities and duties; for the King exacted her constant services, which wearied and disgusted her. She was born for freedom, but was really a slave, although she wore gilded fetters. She was not what one would call an unhappy or disappointed woman, since she attained the end to which she had aspired. But she could not escape humiliations. She was in a false position. Her reputation was aspersed. She was only a wife whose marriage was concealed; she was not a queen. All she gained, she extorted.

In rising to the exalted height of ruling the court of France she yet abdicated her throne as an untrammelled queen of society, and became the slave of a pompous, ceremonious, self-conscious, egotistical, selfish, peevish, self-indulgent, tyrannical, exacting, priest-ridden, worn-out, disenchanted old voluptuary. And when he died she was treated as a usurper rather than a wife, and was obliged to leave the palace, where she would have been insulted, and take up her quarters in the convent she had founded. The King did not leave her by his will a large fortune, so that she was obliged to curtail her charities.

Madame de Maintenon lived to be eighty-four, and retained her intellectual faculties to the last, retiring to the Abbey of St. Cyr on the death of the King in 1715, and surviving him but four years. She was beloved and honored by those who knew her intimately. She was the idol of the girls of St. Cyr, who worshipped the ground on which she trod. Yet she made no mark in history after the death of Louis XIV. All her greatness was but the reflection of his glory. Her life, successful as it was, is but a confirmation of the folly of seeking a position which is not legitimate. No position is truly desirable which is a false one, which can be retained only by art, and which subjects one to humiliation and mortifications. I have great admiration for the many excellent qualities of this extraordinary

and gifted woman, although I know that she is not a favorite with historians. She is not endeared to the heart of the nation she indirectly ruled. She is positively disliked by a large class, not merely for her narrow religious intolerance, but even for the arts by which she gained so great an influence. Yet liked or disliked, it would be difficult to find in French history a greater or more successful woman.

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SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

THE WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

A. D. 1660–1744.

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

THE WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

IN the career of Madame de Maintenon we have seen in a woman an inordinate ambition to rise in the world and control public affairs. In the history of the Duchess of Marlborough, we see the same ambition, the same love of power, the same unscrupulous adaptation of means to an end. Yet the aim and ends of these two remarkable political women were different. The Frenchwoman had in view the reform of a wicked court, the interests of education, the extirpation of heresy, the elevation of men of genius, the social and religious improvement of a great nation, as she viewed it, through a man who bore absolute sway. The Englishwoman connived at political corruptions, was indifferent to learning and genius, and exerted her great influence, not for the good of her country, but to advance the fortunes of her family. Madame de Maintenon, if narrow and intolerant, was unselfish, charitable, religious, and patriotic; the Duchess of

Marlborough was selfish, grasping, avaricious, and worldly in all her aspirations. Both were ambitious, — the one to benefit the country which she virtually ruled, and the other to accumulate honors and riches by cabals and intrigues in the court of a weak woman whom she served and despised. Madame de Maintenon, in a greater position, as the wife of the most powerful monarch in Christendom, was gentle, amiable, condescending, and kind-hearted; the Duchess of Marlborough was haughty, insolent, and acrimonious. Both were beautiful, bright, witty, and intellectual; but the Frenchwoman was immeasurably more cultivated, and was impressible by grand sentiments.

And yet the Duchess of Marlborough was a great woman. She was the most prominent figure in the Court of Queen Anne, and had a vast influence on the politics of her day. Her name is associated with great statesmen and generals. She occupied the highest social position of any woman in England after that of the royal family. She had the ear and the confidence of the Queen. The greatest offices were virtually at her disposal. Around her we may cluster the leading characters and events of the age of Queen Anne.

Sarah Jennings, the future Duchess of Marlborough, was born in 1660. She belonged to a good though not a noble family, which for many generations possessed

a good estate in Hertfordshire. Her grandfather, Sir John Jennings, was a zealous adherent to the royal cause before the Revolution, and received the Order of the Bath, in company with his patron, Charles I., then Prince of Wales. When Sarah was twelve years of age, she found a kind friend in the Duchess of York, Mary Beatrice Eleanora, Princess of Modena (an adopted daughter of Louis XIV.), who married James, brother of Charles II. The young girl was thus introduced to the dangerous circle which surrounded the Duke of York, and she passed her time, not in profitable studies, but in amusements and revels. She lived in the ducal household as a playmate of the Princess Anne, and was a beautiful, bright, and witty young lady, though not well educated. In the year 1673 she became acquainted with John Churchill, a colonel of the army and a gentleman of the bed-chamber to the Duke of York, — the latter a post of honor, but of small emolument. He was at that time twenty-three years of age, a fine-looking and gallant soldier, who had already distinguished himself at the siege of Tangier. He had also fought under the banners of Marshal Turenne in the Low Countries, by whom he was called the "handsome Englishman." At the siege of Mæstricht he further advanced his fortunes, succeeding the famous Earl of Peterborough in the command of the English troops, then in alliance with Louis XIV. He was not

a man of intellectual culture, nor was he deeply read. It is said that even his spelling was bad; but his letters were clear and forcible. He made up his deficiency in education by irresistibly pleasing manners, remarkable energy, and a coolness of judgment that was seldom known to err.

His acquaintance with the beautiful Sarah Jennings soon ripened into love; but he was too poor to marry. Nor had she a fortune. They however became engaged to each other, and the betrothal continued three years. It was not till 1678 that the marriage took place. The colonel was domestic in his tastes and amiable in his temper, and his home was happy. He was always fond of his wife, although her temper was quick and her habits exacting. She was proud, irascible, and overbearing, while he was meek and gentle. In other respects they were equally matched, since both were greedy, ambitious, and worldly. A great stain, too, rested on his character; for he had been scandalously intimate with Barbara Villiers, mistress of Charles II., who gave him £5000, with which he bought an annuity of £500 a year, — thus enabling him to marry Miss Jennings.

In 1685 Charles II. died, and was succeeded by his brother the Duke of York, as James II. The new King rewarded his favorite, Colonel Churchill, with a Scotch peerage and the command of a regiment of

guards. James's two daughters, the princesses Mary and Anne, now became great personages. But from mutual jealousy they did not live together very harmoniously. Mary, the elder daughter, was much the superior of her sister, and her marriage with William of Orange was particularly happy.

The Princess Anne was weak and far from being interesting. But she was inordinately attached to Lady Churchill, who held a high post of honor and emolument in her household. It does not appear that the attachment was mutual between these two ladies, but the forms of it were kept up by Lady Churchill, who had ambitious ends to gain. She gradually acquired an absolute ascendency over the mind of the Princess, who could not live happily without her companionship and services. Lady Churchill was at this time remarkably striking in her appearance, with a clear complexion, regular features, majestic figure, and beautiful hair, which was dressed without powder. She also had great power of conversation, was frank, out-spoken, and amusing, but without much tact. The Princess wrote to her sometimes four times a day, always in the strain of humility, and seemed utterly dependent upon her. Anne was averse to reading, spending her time at cards and frivolous pleasures. She was fond of etiquette, and exacting in trifles. She was praised for her piety, which would appear however to have been

formal and technical. She was placid, phlegmatic, and had no conversational gifts. She played tolerably on the guitar, loved the chase, and rode with the hounds until disabled by the gout, which was brought about by the pleasures of the table. In 1683 she married Prince George of Denmark, and by him had thirteen children, not one of whom survived her; most of them died in infancy. As the daughter of James II., she was of course a Tory in her political opinions.

Lady Churchill was also at that time a moderate Tory, and fanned the prejudices of her mistress. But in order to secure a still greater intimacy and freedom than was consistent with their difference in rank, the two ladies assumed the names of Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman. In the correspondence between them the character of the Princess appears to the greater advantage, since she was at least sincere in her admiration and friendship. She assumes no superiority in any respect; in her intellectual dependence she is even humble.

Anne was seemingly disinterested in her friendship with Lady Churchill, having nothing to gain but services, for which she liberally compensated her. But the society of a weak woman could not have had much fascination for so independent and self-sustained a person as was the proud peeress. It eventually became irksome to her. But there was no outward flaw in the

friendship until Anne ascended the throne in 1702, — not even for several years after.

The accession of William and Mary in 1688 changed the position of Anne, to whom the nation now looked as a probable future queen. She was at that time severely censured for her desertion of her father James, and her conduct seemed both heartless and frivolous. But she was virtually in the hands of an unscrupulous woman and the great ministers of State. On the flight of the King, James II., the Princess Anne retired to Chatsworth, — the magnificent seat of the Earl of Devonshire, — accompanied by Lady Churchill, her inseparable companion.

Two days before the coronation of William and Mary, Lord Churchill was created Earl of Marlborough, and was sworn a member of the Privy Council and a lord of the bed-chamber. This elevation was owing to his military talents, which no one appreciated better than the King, who however never personally liked Marlborough, and still less his ambitious wife. He was no stranger to their boundless cupidity, though he pretended not to see it. He was politic, not being in a position to dispense with the services of the ablest military general of his realm.

William III. was a remarkably wise and clear-headed prince, and saw the dangers which menaced him, — the hostility of Louis XIV., the rebels in Ire-

land, and the disaffection among the Jacobite nobility in England, who secretly favored the exiled monarch. So he rewarded and elevated a man whom he both admired and despised. William had many sterling virtues; he was sincere and patriotic and public-spirited; he was a stanch Protestant of the Calvinistic school, and very attentive to his religious duties. But with all his virtues and services to the English nation, he was not a favorite. His reserve, coldness, and cynicism were in striking contrast with the affability of the Stuarts. He had no imagination and no graces; he disgusted the English nobles by drinking Holland gin, and by his brusque manners. But nothing escaped his eagle eye. On the field of battle he was as ardent and fiery as he was dull and phlegmatic at Hampton Court, his favorite residence. He was capable of warm friendships, uninteresting as he seemed to the English nobles; but he was intimate only with his Dutch favorites, like Bentinck and Keppel, whom he elevated to English peerages. He spent only a few months in England each year of the thirteen of his reign, being absorbed in war most of the time with Louis XIV. and the Irish rebels.

William found that his English throne was anything but a bed of roses. The Tories, in the tumults and dangers attending the flight of James II., had promoted his elevation; but they were secretly hostile,

and when dangers had passed, broke out in factious opposition. The high-church clergy disliked a Calvinistic king in sympathy with Dissenters. The Irish gave great trouble under Tyrconnel and old Marshal Schomberg, the latter of whom was killed at the battle of the Boyne. A large party was always in opposition to the unceasing war with Louis XIV., whom William hated with implacable animosity.

The Earl of Marlborough, on the accession of William, was a moderate Tory, and was soon suspected of not being true to his sovereign. His treason might have resulted in the return of the Stuarts but for the energy and sagacity of Queen Mary, in whose hands the supreme executive power was placed by William when absent from the kingdom. She summoned at once the Parliament, prevented the defection of the navy, and ferreted out the hostile intrigues, in which the lord-treasurer Godolphin was also implicated. But for the fortunate naval victory of La Hogue over the French fleet, which established the naval supremacy of England, the throne of William and the Protestant succession would have been seriously endangered; for William was unfortunate in his Flemish campaigns.

When the King was apprised of the treasonable intrigues which endangered his throne, he magnanimously pardoned Godolphin and the Duke of Shrewsbury, but sent Marlborough to the Tower, although he

soon after released him, when it was found that several of the letters which compromised him had been forged. For some time Marlborough lived in comparative retirement, while his wife devoted herself to politics and her duties on the person of the Princess Anne, who was treated very coldly by her sister the Queen, and was even deprived of her guards. But the bickerings and quarrels of the royal sisters were suddenly ended by the death of Mary from the small-pox, which then fearfully raged in London. The grief of the King was sincere and excessive, as well as that of the nation, and his affliction softened his character and mitigated his asperity against Marlborough. Shortly after the death of his queen, William made Marlborough governor of the Duke of Gloucester, then (1698) a very promising prince, in the tenth year of his age. This prince, only surviving son of Anne, had a feeble body, and was unwisely crammed by Bishop Burnet, his preceptor, and overworked by Marlborough, who taught him military tactics. Neither his body nor his mind could stand the strain made upon him, and he was carried off at the age of eleven by a fever.

The untimely death of the Prince was a great disappointment to the nation, and cast a gloom over the remaining years of the reign of William, who from this time declined in health and spirits. One of his last acts was to appoint the Earl of Marlborough gen-

eral of the troops in Flanders, knowing that he was the only man who could successfully oppose the marshals of France. Only five days before his death the King sent a recommendation to Parliament for the union of Scotland and England, and the last act of Parliament to which he gave his consent was that which fixed the succession in the House of Hanover. At the age of fifty-one, while planning the campaign which was to make Marlborough immortal, William received his death-stroke, which was accidental. He was riding in the park of Hampton Court, when his horse stumbled and he was thrown, dislocating his collar-bone. The bone was set, and might have united but for the imprudence of the King, who insisted on going to Kensington on important business. Fever set in, and in a few days this noble and heroic king died (March 8, 1702), — the greatest of the English kings since the Wars of the Roses, to whom the English nation owed the peaceful settlement of the kingdom in times of treason and rebellion.

The Princess Anne, at the age of thirty-seven, quietly ascended the throne, and all eyes were at once turned to Marlborough, on whom the weight of public affairs rested. He was now fifty-three, active, wise, well poised, experienced, and generally popular in spite of his ambition and treason. He had, as we have already remarked, been a moderate Tory, but as he was the

advocate of war measures, he now became one of the leaders of the Whig party. Indeed, he was at this time the foremost man in England, on account of his great talents as a statesman and diplomatist as well as general, and for the ascendency of his wife over the mind of the Queen.

Next to him in power was the lord-treasurer Godolphin, to whom he was bound by ties of friendship, family alliance, and political principles. Like Marlborough, Godolphin had in early life been attached to the service of the House of Stuart. He had been page to Charles II., and lord chamberlain to Mary of Modena. The Princess Anne, when a young lady, became attached to this amiable and witty man, and would have married him if reasons of State had not prevented. After the Revolution of 1688 his merits were so conspicuous that he was retained in the service of William and Mary, and raised to the peerage. In sound judgment, extraordinary sagacity, untiring industry, and unimpeached integrity, he resembled Lord Burleigh in the reign of Elizabeth, and, like him, rendered great public services. Grave, economical, cautious, upright, courteous in manners, he was just the man for the stormy times in which he lived. He had his faults, being fond of play (the passion of that age) and of women. Says Swift, who libelled him, as he did every prominent man of the Whig party, "He could scratch



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out a song in praise of his mistress with a pencil on a card, or overflow with tears like a woman when he had an object to gain."

But the real ruler of the land, on the accession of Anne, was the favored wife of Marlborough. If ever a subject stood on the very pinnacle of greatness, it was she. All the foreign ambassadors flattered her and paid court to her. The greatest nobles solicited or bought of her the lucrative offices in the gift of the Crown. She was the dispenser of court favors, as Mesdames de Maintenon and Pompadour were in France. She was the admiration of gifted circles, in which she reigned as a queen of society. Poets sang her praises and extolled her beauty; statesmen craved her influence. Nothing took place at court to which she was not privy. She was the mainspring of all political cabals and intrigues; even the Queen treated her with deference, as well as loaded her with gifts, and Godolphin consulted her on affairs of State. The military fame of her husband gave her unbounded éclat. No Englishwoman ever had such an exalted social position; she reigned in salons as well as in the closet of the Queen. And she succeeded in marrying her daughters to the proudest peers. Her eldest daughter, Henrietta, was the wife of an earl and prime minister. Her second daughter, Anne, married Lord Charles Spencer, the only son of the Earl of Sunderland, one of the leaders of the Whig party and

secretary of state. Her third daughter became the wife of the Earl, afterwards Duke, of Bridgewater; and the fourth and youngest daughter had for her husband the celebrated Duke of Montague, grand-master of the Order of the Bath.

Thus did Sarah Jennings rise. Her daughters were married to great nobles and statesmen, her husband was the most famous general of his age, and she herself was the favorite and confidential friend and adviser of the Queen. Upon her were showered riches and honor. She had both influence and power, — influence from her talents, and power from her position. And when she became duchess, — after the great victory of Blenheim, — and a princess of the German Empire, she had nothing more to aspire to in the way of fortune or favor or rank. She was the first woman of the land, next to the Queen, whom she ruled while nominally serving her.

There are very few people in this world, whether men or women, who remain unchanged under the influence of boundless prosperity. So rare are the exceptions, that the rule is established. Wealth, honor, and power will produce luxury, pride, and selfishness. How few can hope to be superior to Solomon, Mohammed, Constantine, Theodosius, Louis XIV., Madame de Maintenon, Queen Elizabeth, Maria Theresa, or Napoleon, in that sublime self-control which looks down

on the temptations of earth with the placid indifference of a Marcus Aurelius! Even prosperous people in comparatively humble life generally become arrogant and opinionated, and like to have things in their own way.

Now, Lady Marlborough was both proud by nature and the force of circumstances. She became an incarnation of arrogance, which she could not conceal, and which she never sought to control. When she became the central figure in the Court and in the State, flattered and sought after wherever she went, before whom the greatest nobles burned their incense, and whom the people almost worshipped in a country which has ever idolized rank and power, she assumed airs and gave vent to expressions that wounded her friend the Queen. Anne bore her friend's intolerable pride, blended with disdain, for a long time after her accession. But her own character also began to change. Sovereigns do not like dictation from subjects, however powerful. And when securely seated on her throne, Anne began to avow opinions which she had once found it politic to conceal. She soon became as jealous of her prerogative as her uncle Charles and her father James had been of theirs. She was at heart a Tory,—as was natural,—and attached to the interests of her banished relatives. She looked upon the Whigs as hostile to what she held dear. She began to dislike ministers who had been in

high favor with the late King, especially Lord Chancellor Somers and Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, — since these powerful nobles, allied with Godolphin and Marlborough, ruled England. Thus the political opinions of the Queen came gradually to be at variance with those advanced by her favorite, whose daughters were married to great Whig nobles, and whose husband was bent on continuing the war against Louis XIV. and the exiled Stuarts. But, as we have said, Anne for a long time suppressed her feelings of incipient alienation, produced by the politics and haughty demeanor of her favorite, and still wrote to her as her beloved Mrs. Freeman, and signed her letters, as usual, as her humble Morley. Her treatment of the Countess continued the same as ever, full of affection and confidence. She could not break with a friend who had so long been indispensable to her; nor had she strength of character to reveal her true feelings.

Meanwhile a renewed war was declared against Louis XIV. on account of his determination to place his grandson on the throne of Spain. The Tories were bitterly opposed to this war of the Spanish succession, as unnecessary, expensive, and ruinous to the development of national industry. They were also jealous of Marlborough, whose power they feared would be augmented by the war, as the commander-in-chief of the united Dutch and English forces. And the result

was indeed what they feared. His military successes were so great in this war that on his return to England he was created a duke, and soon after received unusual grants from Parliament, controlled by the Whigs, which made him the richest man in England as well as the most powerful politically. Yet even up to this time the relations between his wife and the Queen were apparently most friendly. But soon after this the haughty favorite became imprudent in the expressions she used before her royal mistress; she began to weary of the drudgeries of her office as mistress of the robes, and turned over her duties partially to a waiting-woman, who was destined ultimately to supplant her in the royal favor. The Queen was wounded to the quick by some things that the Duchess said and did, which she was supposed not to hear or see; for the Duchess was now occasionally careless as well as insolent. The Queen was forced to perceive that the Duchess disdained her feeble intellect and some of her personal habits, and was, moreover, hostile to her political opinions; and she began to long for an independence she had never truly enjoyed. But the Duchess, intoxicated with power and success, did not see the ground on which she stood; yet if she continued to rule her mistress, it was by fear rather than love.

About this period (1706) the struggles and hostilities of the Whigs and Tories were at their height. We have

in these times but a feeble conception of the bitterness of the strife of these two great parties in the beginning of the eighteenth century. It divided families, and filled the land with slanders and intrigues. The leaders of both parties were equally aristocratic and equally opposed to reform; both held the people in sovereign contempt. The struggle between them was simply a struggle for place and emolument. The only real difference in their principles was that one party was secretly in favor of the exiled family and was opposed to the French war, and the other was more jealously Protestant, and was in favor of the continuance of the war. The Tories accused Marlborough of needlessly prolonging the war in order to advance his personal interests, — from which charge it would be difficult to acquit him.

One of the most prominent leaders of the Tories was Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, who belonged to a Puritan family in Hertfordshire, and was originally a Whig. He entered Parliament in the early part of the reign of William. Macaulay, who could see no good in the Tories, in his violent political prejudices maintained that Harley was not a man of great breadth of intellect, and exerted an influence in Parliament disproportionate to his abilities. But he was a most insidious and effective enemy. He was sagacious enough to perceive the growing influence of men of

letters, and became their patron and friend. He advanced the fortunes of Pope, Arbuthnot, and Prior. He purchased the services of Swift, the greatest master of satire blended with bitter invective that England had known. Harley was not eloquent in speech; but he was industrious, learned, exact, and was always listened to with respect. Nor had he any scandalous vices. He could not be corrupted by money, and his private life was decorous. He abhorred both gambling and drunkenness, — the fashionable vices of that age. He was a refined, social, and cultivated man.

This statesman perceived that it was imperatively necessary for the success of his party to undermine the overpowering influence of the Duchess of Marlborough with the Queen. He detested her arrogance, disdain, and grasping ambition. Moreover, he had the firm conviction that England should engage only in maritime war. He hated the Dutch and moneyed men, and Dissenters of every sect, although originally one of them. And when he had obtained the leadership of his party in the House of Commons, he brought to bear the whole force of his intellect against both the Duke and Duchess. It was by his intrigues that the intimate relations between the Duchess and the Queen were broken up, and that the Duke became unpopular.

The great instrument by which he effected the disgrace of the imperious Duchess was a woman who was equally his cousin and the cousin of the Duchess, and for whom the all-powerful favorite had procured the office of chamber-woman and dresser, — in other words, a position which in an inferior rank is called that of lady's maid; for the Duchess was wearied of constant attendance on the Queen, and to this woman some of her old duties were delegated. The name of this woman was Abigail Hill. She had been in very modest circumstances, but was a person of extraordinary tact, prudence, and discretion, though very humble in her address, — qualities the reverse of those which marked her great relative. Nor did the proud Duchess comprehend Miss Hill's character and designs any more than the all-powerful Madame de Montespan comprehended those of the widow Scarron when she made her the governess of her children. But Harley understood her, and their principles and aims were in harmony. Abigail Hill was a bigoted Tory, and her supreme desire was to ingratiate herself in the favor of her royal mistress. especially when she was tired of the neglect or annoyed by the railleries of her exacting favorite. By degrees the humble lady's-maid obtained the same ascendency over the Queen that had been exercised by the mistress of the robes, — in the one case secured by humility, assiduous attention, and con-

stant flatteries; in the other, obtained by talent and brilliant fascinations. Abigail was ruled by Harley; Sarah was ruled by no one but her husband, who understood her caprices and resentments, and seldom directly opposed her. Moreover, she was a strong-minded woman, who could listen to reason after her fits of passion had passed away.

The first thing of note which occurred, showing to the Duchess that her influence was undermined, was the refusal of the Queen to allow Lord Cowper, the lord chancellor, to fill up the various livings belonging to the Crown, in spite of the urgent solicitations of the Duchess. This naturally produced a coolness between Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Morley. Harley was now the confidential adviser of the Queen, and counselled her "to go alone," — that is, to throw off the shackles which she had too long ignominiously worn; and Anne at once appointed high-church divines — Tories of course — to the two vacant bishoprics. The under-stream of faction was flowing unseen, but deep and strong, which the infatuated Duchess did not suspect.

The great victory of Ramillies (1706) gave so much éclat to Marlborough that the outbreak between his wife and the Queen was delayed for a time. That victory gave a new lease of power to the Whigs. Harley and St. John, the secret enemies of the Duke, welcomed him with their usual smiles and flatteries, and even

voted for the erection of Blenheim, one of the most expensive palaces ever built in England.

Meanwhile Harley pursued his intrigues to effect the downfall of the Duchess. Miss Hill, unknown to her great relative and patroness, married Mr. Masham, equerry to Prince George, who was shortly after made a brigadier-general and peer. Nothing could surpass the indignation of the Duchess when she heard of this secret marriage. That it should be concealed from her while it was known to the Queen, showed conclusively that her power over Anne was gone. And, still further, she perceived that she was supplanted by a relative whom she had raised from obscurity. She now comprehended the great influence of Harley at court, and also the declining favor of her husband. It was a bitter reflection to the proud Duchess that the alienation of the Queen was the result of her own folly and pride rather than of royal capriciousness. She now paid no inconsiderable penalty for the neglect of her mistress and the gratification of her pride. Pride has ever been the chief cause of the downfall of royal favorites. It ruined Louvois, Wolsey, and Thomas Cromwell; it broke the chain which bound Louis XIV. to the imperious Montespan. It ever goes before destruction. The Duchess of Marlborough forgot that her friend Mrs. Morley was also her sovereign the Queen. She might have retained the Queen's favor to the

end, in spite of political opinions; but she presumed too far on the ascendency which she had enjoyed for nearly thirty years. There is no height from which one may not fall; and it takes more ability to retain a proud position than to gain it. There are very few persons who are beyond the reach of envy and detraction; and the loftier the position one occupies, the more subtle, numerous, and desperate are one's secret enemies.

The Duchess was not, however, immediately "disgraced," — as the expression is in reference to great people who lose favor at court. She still retained her offices and her apartments in the royal palace; she still had access to the Queen; she was still addressed as "my dear Mrs. Freeman." But Mrs. Masham had supplanted her; and Harley, through the influence of the new favorite, ruled at court. The disaffection which had long existed between the secretary of state and the lord treasurer deepened into absolute aversion. It became the aim of both ministers to ruin each other. The Queen now secretly sided with the Tories, although she had not the courage to quarrel openly with her powerful ministers, or with her former favorite. Nor was "the great breach" made public.

But the angry and disappointed Duchess gave vent to her wrath and vengeance in letters to her husband and in speech to Godolphin. She entreated them to avenge

her quarrel. She employed spies about the Queen. She brought to bear her whole influence on the leaders of the Whigs. She prepared herself for an open conflict with her sovereign; for she saw clearly that the old relations of friendship and confidence between them would never return. A broken friendship is a broken jar; it may be mended, but never restored,—its glory has departed. And this is one of the bitterest experiences of life, on whomsoever the fault may be laid. The fault in this instance was on the side of the Duchess, and not on that of her patron. The arrogance and dictation of the favorite had become intolerable; it was as hard to bear as the insolence of a petted servant.

The Duke of Marlborough and Lord Godolphin took up the quarrel with zeal. They were both at the summit of power, and both were leaders of their party. The victories of the former had made him the most famous man in Europe and the greatest subject in England. They declined to serve their sovereign any longer, unless Harley were dismissed from office; and the able secretary of state was obliged to resign.

But Anne could not forget that she was forced to part with her confidential minister, and continued to be ruled by his counsels. She had secret nocturnal meetings in the palace with both Harley and Mrs. Masham, to the chagrin of the ministers. The court

became the scene of intrigues and cabals. Not only was Harley dismissed, but also Henry St. John, afterwards the famous Lord Bolingbroke, the intimate friend and patron of Pope. He was secretary of war, and was a man of great ability, of more genius even than Harley. He was an infidel in his religious opinions, and profligate in his private life. Like Harley, he was born of Puritan parents, and, like him, repudiated his early principles. He was the most eloquent orator in the House of Commons, which he entered in 1700 as a Whig. At that time he was much admired by Marlborough, who used his influence to secure his entrance into the cabinet. His most remarkable qualities were political sagacity, and penetration into the motives and dispositions of men. He gradually went over to the Tories, and his alliance with Harley was strengthened by personal friendship as well as political sympathies. He was the most interesting man of his age in society, — witty, bright, and courtly. In conversational powers he was surpassed only by Swift.

Meanwhile the breach between the Queen and the Duchess gradually widened. And as the former grew cold in her treatment of her old friend, she at the same time annoyed her ministers by the appointment of Tory bishops to the vacant sees. She went so far as to encroach on the prerogatives of the general of her armies, by making military appointments without his

consent. This interference Marlborough properly resented. But his influence was now on the wane, as the nation wearied of a war which, as it seemed to the Tories, he needlessly prolonged. Moreover, the Duke of Somerset, piqued by the refusal of the general to give a regiment to his son, withdrew his support from the Government. The Duke of Shrewsbury and other discontented noblemen left the Whig party. The unwise prosecution of Dr. Sacheverell for a seditious libel united the whole Tory party in a fierce opposition to the Government, which was becoming every day more unpopular. Harley was indefatigable in intrigues. "He fasted with religious zealots and feasted with convivial friends." He promised everything to everybody, but kept his own counsels.

In such a state of affairs, with the growing alienation of the Queen, it became necessary for the proud Duchess to resign her offices; but before doing this she made one final effort to regain what she had lost. She besought the Queen for a private interview, which was refused. Again importuned, her Majesty sullenly granted the interview, but refused to explain anything, and even abruptly left the room, and was so rude that the Duchess burst into a flood of tears which she could not restrain, — not tears of grief, but tears of wrath and shame.

Thus was finally ended the memorable friendship

between Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman, which had continued for twenty-seven years. The Queen and Duchess never met again. Soon after, in 1710, followed the dismissal of Lord Godolphin, as lord treasurer, who was succeeded by Harley, created Earl of Oxford. Sunderland, too, was dismissed, and his post of secretary of state was given to St. John, created Viscount Bolingbroke. Lord Cowper resigned the seals, and Sir Simon Harcourt, an avowed adherent of the Pretender, became lord chancellor. The Earl of Rochester, the bitterest of all the Tories, was appointed president of the council. The Duke of Marlborough, however, was not dismissed from his high command until 1711. One reason for his dismissal was that he was suspected of aiming to make himself supreme. On his return from the battle of Malplaquet, he had coolly demanded to be made captain-general for life. Such a haughty demand would have been regarded as dangerous in a great crisis; it was absurd when public dangers had passed away. Even Lord Cowper, his friend the chancellor, shrunk from it with amazement. Such a demand would have been deemed arrogant in Wallenstein, amid the successes of Gustavus Adolphus.

No insignificant cause of the triumph of the Tory party at this time was the patronage which the Tory leaders extended to men of letters, and the bitter political tracts which these literary men wrote and for which

they were paid. In that age the speeches of members of Parliament were not reported or published, and hence had but little influence on public opinion. Even ministers resorted to political tracts to sustain their power, or to undermine that of their opponents; and these were more efficient than speeches in the House of Commons. Bolingbroke was the most eloquent orator of his day; but no orators arose in Anne's reign equal to Pitt and Fox in the reign of George III. Hence the political leaders availed themselves of the writings of men of letters, with whom they freely associated. And this intercourse was deemed a great condescension on the part of nobles and cabinet ministers. In that age great men were not those who were famous for genius, but those who were exalted in social position. Still, genius was held in high honor by those who controlled public affairs, whenever it could be made subservient to their interests.

Foremost among the men of genius who lent their pen to the service of nobles and statesmen was Jonathan Swift, — clergyman, poet, and satirist. But he was more famous for his satire than for his sermons or his poetry. Everybody winced under his terrible assaults. He was both feared and hated, especially by the "great;" hence they flattered him and courted his society. He became the intimate friend and companion of Oxford and Bolingbroke. He dined with

the prime-minister every Sunday, and in fact as often as he pleased. He rarely dined at home, and almost lived in the houses of the highest nobles, who welcomed him not only for the aid he gave them by his writings, but for his wit and agreeable discourse. At one time he was the most influential man in England, although poor and without office or preferment. He possessed two or three livings in Ireland, which together brought him about £500, on which he lived, — generally in London, at least when his friends were in power. They could not spare him, and he was intrusted with the most important secrets of state. His insolence was superb. He affected equality with dukes and earls; he "condescended" to accept their banquets. The first time that Bolingbroke invited him to dine, his reply was that "if the Queen gave his lordship a dukedom and the Garter and the Treasury also, he would regard them no more than he would a groat." This assumed independence was the habit of his life. He indignantly returned £100 to Harley, which the minister had sent him as a gift: he did not work for money, but for influence and a promised bishopric. But the Queen — a pious woman of the conventional school — would never hear of his elevation to the bench of bishops, in consequence of the "Tale of a Tub," in which he had ridiculed everything sacred and profane. He was the bitterest satirist that England

has produced. The most his powerful friends could do for him was to give him the deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin, worth about £800 a year.

Swift was first brought to notice by Sir William Temple, in the reign of William and Mary, he being Sir William's secretary. At first he was a Whig, and a friend of Addison; but, neglected by Marlborough and Godolphin, — who cared but little for literary genius, — he became a Tory. In 1710 he became associated with Harley, St. John, Atterbury, and Prior, in the defence of the Tory party; but he never relinquished his friendship with Addison, for whom he had profound respect and admiration. Swift's life was worldly, but moral. He was remarkably temperate in eating and drinking, and parsimonious in his habits. One of his most bitter complaints in his letters to Stella — to whom he wrote every day — was of the expense of coach-hire in his visits to nobles and statesmen. It would seem that he creditably discharged his clerical duties. He attended the daily service in the cathedral, and preached when his turn came. He was charitable to the poor, and was a friend to Ireland, to whose people he rendered great services from his influence with the Government. He was beloved greatly by the Irish nation, in spite of his asperity, parsimony, and bad temper. He is generally regarded by critics as a selfish and heartless man; and his treatment of the two women

whose affections he had gained was certainly inexplicable and detestable. His old age was miserable and sad. He died insane, having survived his friends and his influence. But his writings have lived. His "Gulliver's Travels" is still one of the most famous and popular books in our language, in spite of its revolting and vulgar details. Swift, like Addison, was a great master of style, — clear, forcible, and natural; and in vigor he surpassed any writer of his age.

It was the misfortune of the Duchess of Marlborough to have this witty and malignant satirist for an enemy. He exposed her peculiarities, and laid bare her character with fearless effrontery. It was thus that he attacked the most powerful woman in England: "A lady of my acquaintance appropriated £26 a year out of her allowance for certain uses which the lady received, or was to pay to the lady or her order when called for. But after eight years it appeared upon the strictest calculation that the woman had paid but £4, and sunk £22 for her own pocket. It is but supposing £26 instead of £26,000, and by that you may judge what the pretensions of modern merit are when it happens to be its own paymaster." Who could stand before such insinuations? The Duchess afterwards attempted to defend herself against the charge of peculation as the keeper of the privy purse; but no one believed her. She was notoriously avaricious and unscrupulous.

Swift spared no personage in the party of the Whigs, when by so doing he could please the leaders of the Tories. And he wrote in an age when libels were scandalous and savage, — libels which would now subject their authors to punishment. The acrimony of party strife at that time has never since been equalled. Even poets attacked each other with savage recklessness. There was no criticism after the style of Sainte-Beuve. Writers sought either to annihilate or to extravagantly praise. The jealousy which poets displayed in reference to each other's productions was as unreasonable and bitter as the envy and strife between country doctors, or musicians at the opera.

There was one great writer in the age of Queen Anne who was an exception to this nearly universal envy and bitterness; and this was Addison, who was as serene and calm as other critics were furious and unjust. Even Swift spared this amiable and accomplished writer, although he belonged to the Whig party. Joseph Addison, born in 1672, was the most fortunate man of letters in his age, — perhaps in any succeeding age in English history. He was early distinguished as a writer of Latin poems; and in 1699, at the age of twenty-seven, the young scholar was sent by Montague, at the recommendation of Somers, to the Continent, on a pension of £300 a year, to study languages with a view to the diplomatic service. On the accession of

Anne, Addison was obliged to return to literature for his support. Solicited by Godolphin, under the advice of Halifax, to write a poem on the victories of Marlborough, he wrote one so popular that he rapidly rose in favor with the Whig ministry. In 1708 he was made secretary for Ireland, under Lord Wharton, and entered Parliament. He afterwards was made secretary of state, married a peeress, and spent his last days at Holland House.

But Addison was no politician; nor did he distinguish himself in Parliament or as a political writer. He could not make a speech, not having been trained to debate. He was too timid, and his taste was too severe, for the arena of politicians. He is immortal for his essays, in which his humor is transcendent, and his style easy and graceful. As a writer, he is a great artist. No one has ever been able to equal him in the charming simplicity of his style. Macaulay, a great artist himself in the use of language, places Addison on the summit of literary excellence and fame as an essayist. One is at loss to comprehend why so quiet and unobtrusive a scholar should have been selected for important political positions, but can easily understand why he was the admiration of the highest social circles for his wit and the elegance of his conversation. He was the personification of urbanity and every gentlemanly quality, as well as one of the best scholars of his

age; but it was only in an aristocratic age, when a few great nobles controlled public affairs, that such a man could have been so recognized, rewarded, and honored. He died beloved and universally lamented, and his writings are still classics, and likely to remain so. He was not an oracle in general society, like Mackintosh and Macaulay; but among congenial and trusted friends he gave full play to his humor, and was as charming as Washington Irving is said to have been in his chosen circle of admirers. Although he was a Whig, we do not read of any particular intimacy with such men as Marlborough and Godolphin. Marlborough, though an accomplished and amiable man, was not fond of the society of wits, as were Halifax, Montague, Harley, and St. John. As for the Duchess, she was too proud and grand for such a retired scholar as Addison to feel at ease in her worldly coteries. She cared no more for poetry or severe intellectual culture than politicians generally do. She shone only in a galaxy of ladies of rank and fashion. I do not read that she ever took a literary man into her service, and she had no more taste for letters than the sovereign she served. She was doubtless intellectual, shrewd, and discriminating; but her intellect was directed to current political movements, and she was coarse in her language. She would swear, like Queen Elizabeth, when excited to anger and her wrath was terrible.

On the dismissal of the great Duke from all his offices, and the "disgrace" of his wife at court, they led a comparatively quiet life abroad. The Duchess had parted with her offices with great reluctance. Even when the Queen sent for the golden keys, which were the badge of her office, she refused to surrender them. No one could do anything with the infuriated termagant, and all were afraid of her. She threatened to print the private correspondence of the Queen as Mrs. Morley. The ministers dared not go into her presence, so fierce was her character when offended. To take from her the badge of office was like trying to separate a fierce lioness from her whelps. The only person who could manage her was her husband; and when at last he compelled her to give up the keys, she threw them in a storm of passion at his head, and raved like a maniac. It is amazing how the Queen could have borne so long with the Duchess's ungovernable temper, and still more so how her husband could. But he was always mild and meek in the retirement of his home,—a truly domestic man, to whom pomp was a weariness. Moreover, he was a singularly fortunate man. His ambition and pride and avarice were gratified beyond precedent in English history. He had become the foremost man in his country, and perhaps of his age. And his wife was still looked to as a great personage, not only because of her position and rank, but for her

abilities, which were doubtless great. She was still a power in the land, and was surrounded by children and grandchildren who occupied some of the highest social positions in England.

But she was not happy. What can satisfy a restless and ambitious woman whose happiness is in external pleasures? There is a limit to the favors which fortune showers; and when the limits of success are reached, there must be disappointment. The Duchess was discontented, and became morose, quarrelsome, and hard to please. Her children did not love her, and some were in bitter opposition to her. She was perpetually embroiled in family quarrels. Nothing could soften the asperity of her temper, or restrain her unreasonable exactions. At last England became hateful to her, and she and her husband quitted it, and resided abroad for several years. In the retirement of voluntary exile she answered the numerous accusations against her; for she was maligned on every side, and generally disliked, since her arrogance had become insupportable, even to her daughters.

Meanwhile the last days of Queen Anne's weary existence were drawing to a close. She was assailed with innumerable annoyances. Her body was racked with the gout, and her feeble mind was distracted by the contradictory counsels of her advisers. Any allusion to her successor was a knell of agony to her disturbed

soul. She became suspicious, and was even alienated from Harley, whom she dismissed from office only a few days before her death, which took place Aug. 1, 1714. She died without signing her will, by which omission Mrs. Masham was deprived of her legacy. She died childless, and the Elector George of Hanover ascended her throne.

On the death of the Queen, Marlborough returned to England; and it was one of the first acts of the new king to restore to him the post of captain-general of the land forces, while his son-in-law Sunderland was made lord-lieutenant of Ireland. A Whig cabinet was formed, but the Duke never regained his old political influence, and he gradually retired to private life, residing with the Duchess almost wholly at Holywell. His peaceful retirement, for which he had longed, came at last. He employed his time in surveying the progress of the building of Blenheim, — in which palace he was never destined to live, — and in simple pleasures, for which he never lost a taste. His wife occupied herself in matrimonial projects for her grandchildren, seeking alliances of ambition and interest.

In 1716 the Duke of Marlborough was attacked with a paralytic fit, from the effects of which he only partially recovered. To restore his health, he went to Bath, — then the fashionable and favorite watering-place, whose waters were deemed beneficial to invalids;

and here it was one of the scandals of the day that the rich nobleman would hobble from the public room to his lodgings, in a cold, dark night, to save sixpence in coach-hire. His enjoyments were now few and transient. His nervous system was completely shattered, after so many labors and exposures in his numerous campaigns. He lingered till 1722, when he died leaving a fortune of a million and a half pounds sterling, besides his vast estates. No subject at that time had so large an income. He left a military fame never surpassed in England, — except by Wellington, — and a name unstained by cruelty. So distinguished a man of course received at his death unparalleled funeral honors. He was followed to his temporary resting-place in the vaults of Westminster by the most imposing procession that England had ever seen.

The Duchess of Marlborough was now the richest woman in England. Whatever influence proceeds from rank and riches she still possessed, though the titles and honors of the dukedom descended by act of Parliament, in 1706, to the Countess of Godolphin, with whom she was at war. The Duchess was now sixty-two, with unbroken health and inextinguishable ambition. She resided chiefly at Windsor Lodge, for she held for life the office of ranger of the forest. It was then that she was so severely castigated by Pope in his satirical lines on "Atossa," that she is said to have

sent £1000 to the poet, to suppress the libel,—her avarice and wrath giving way to her policy and pride. For twenty years after the death of her husband she continued an intriguing politician, but on ill terms with Sir Robert Walpole, the prime-minister, whom she cordially hated, more because of money transactions than political disagreement. She was a very disagreeable old woman, yet not without influence, if she was without friends. She had at least the merit of frankness, for she concealed none of her opinions of the King, nor of his ministers, nor of distinguished nobles. She was querulous, and full of complaints and exactions. One of her bitterest complaints was that she was compelled to pay taxes on her house in Windsor Park. She would even utter her complaints before servants. Litigation was not disagreeable to her if she had reason on her side, whether she had law or not.

It was not the good fortune of this strong-minded but unhappy woman to assemble around her in her declining years children and grandchildren who were attached to her. She had alienated even them. She had no intimate friends. "A woman not beloved by her own children can have but little claim to the affections of others." As we have already said, the Duchess was at open variance with her oldest daughter Henrietta, the Countess of Godolphin, to whom she was

never reconciled. Her quarrels with her granddaughter Lady Anne Egerton, afterwards Duchess of Bedford, were violent and incessant. She lived in perpetual altercation with her youngest daughter, the Duchess of Montague. She never was beloved by any of her children at any time, since they were in childhood and youth intrusted to the care of servants and teachers, while the mother was absorbed in political cabals at court. She consulted their interest merely in making for them grand alliances, to gratify her family pride. Her whole life was absorbed in pride and ambition. Nor did the mortification of a dishonored old age improve her temper. She sought neither the consolation of religion nor the intellectual stimulus of history and philosophy. To the last she was as worldly as she was morose. To the last she was a dissatisfied politician. She reviled the Whig administration of Walpole as fiercely as she did the Tory administration of Oxford. She haughtily refused the Order of the Bath for her grandson the Duke of Marlborough, which Walpole offered, contented with nothing less than the Garter. "Madam," replied Walpole, "they who take the Bath will sooner have the Garter." In her old age her ruling passion was hatred of Walpole. "I think," she wrote, "'t is thought wrong to wish anybody dead, but I hope 't is none to wish he may be hanged." Her wishes were partly gratified, for she

lived long enough to see this great statesman — so long supreme — driven to the very threshold of the Tower. For his son Horace she had equal dislike, and he returned her hatred with malignant satire. "Old Marlborough is dying," said the wit; "but who can tell? Last year she had lain a great while ill, without speaking, and her physician told her that she must be blistered, or she would die. She cried out, 'I won't be blistered, and I won't die.'"

She did indeed last some time longer; but with increasing infirmities, her amusements and pleasures became yearly more circumscribed. In former years she had sometimes occupied her mind with the purchase of land; for she was shrewd, and rarely made a bad bargain. Even at the age of eighty she went to the city to bid in person for the estate of Lord Yarmouth. But as her darkened day approached its melancholy close, she amused herself by dictating in bed her "Vindication." After spending thus six hours daily with her secretary, she had recourse to her chamber organ, the eight tunes of which she thought much better to hear than going to the Italian opera. Even society, in which she once shone, — for her intellect was bright and her person beautiful, — at last wearied her and gave her no pleasure. Like many lonely, discontented women, she beame attached to animals; she petted three dogs, in which she saw

virtues that neither men nor women possessed. In her disquiet she often changed her residence. She went from Marlborough House to Windsor Lodge, and from Windsor Lodge to Wimbledon, only to discover that each place was damp and unhealthy. Wrapt up in flannels, and wheeled up and down her room in a chair, she discovered that wealth can only mitigate the evils of humanity, and realized how wretched is any person with a soul filled with discontent and bitterness, when animal spirits are destroyed by the infirmities of old age. All the views of this spoiled favorite of fortune were bounded by the scenes immediately before her. While she was not sceptical, she was far from being religious; and hence she was deprived of the highest consolations given to people in disappointment and sorrow and neglect. The older she grew, the more tenaciously did she cling to temporal possessions, and the more keenly did she feel occasional losses. Her intellect remained unclouded, but her feelings became callous. While she had no reverence for the dead, she felt increasing contempt for the living, — forgetting that no one, however exalted, can live at peace in an atmosphere of disdain.

At last she died, in 1744, unlamented and unloved, in the eighty-fourth year of her age, and was interred by the side of her husband, in the tomb in the chapel of Blenheim. She left £30,000 a year to her grand-

son, Lord John Spencer, provided he would never accept any civil or military office from the Government. She left also £20,000 to Lord Chesterfield, together with her most valuable diamond; but only small sums to most of her relatives or to charities. The residue of her property she left to that other grandson who inherited the title and estates of her husband. £60,000 a year, her estimated income, besides a costly collection of jewels, — one of the most valuable in Europe, — were a great property, when few noblemen at that time had over £30,000 a year.

The life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, is a sad one to contemplate, with all her riches and honors. Let those who envy wealth or rank learn from her history how little worldly prosperity can secure happiness or esteem, without the solid virtues of the heart. The richest and most prosperous woman of her times was the object of blended derision, contempt, and hatred throughout the land which she might have adorned. Why, then, it may be asked, should I single out such a woman for a lecture, — a woman who added neither to human happiness, national prosperity, nor the civilization of her age? Why have I chosen her as one of the Beacon Lights of history? Because I know of no woman who has filled so exalted a position in society, and is so prominent a figure in history, whose

career is a more impressive warning of the dangers to be shunned by those who embark on the perilous and troubled seas of mere worldly ambition. God gave her that to which she aspired, and which so many envy; but "He sent leanness into her soul."

AUTHORITIES.

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MADAME RÉCAMIER.

THE WOMAN OF SOCIETY.

A. D. 1777–1849.

MADAME RÉCAMIER.

THE WOMAN OF SOCIETY.

I KNOW of no woman who by the force of beauty and social fascinations, without extraordinary intellectual gifts or high birth, has occupied so proud a position as a queen of society as Madame Récamier. So I select her as the representative of her class.

It was in Italy that women first drew to their salons the distinguished men of their age, and exercised over them a commanding influence. More than three hundred years ago Olympia Fulvia Morata was the pride of Ferrara, — eloquent with the music of Homer and Virgil, a miracle to all who heard her, giving public lectures to nobles and professors when only a girl of sixteen; and Vittoria Colonna was the ornament of the Court of Naples, and afterwards drew around her at Rome the choicest society of that elegant capital, — bishops, princes, and artists, — equally the friend of Cardinal Pole and of Michael Angelo, and reigning in her retired apartments in the Benedictine convent

of St. Anne, even as the Duchesse de Longueville shone at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, with De Retz and La Rochefoucauld at her feet. This was at a period when the Italian cities were the centre of the new civilization which the Renaissance created, when ancient learning and art were cultivated with an enthusiasm never since surpassed.

The new position which women seem to have occupied in the sixteenth century in Italy, was in part owing to the wealth and culture of cities — ever the paradise of ambitious women — and the influence of poetry and chivalry, of which the Italians were the earliest admirers. Provençal poetry was studied in Italy as early as the time of Dante; and veneration for woman was carried to a romantic excess when the rest of Europe was comparatively rude. Even in the eleventh century we see in the southern part of Europe a respectful enthusiasm for woman coeval with the birth of chivalry. The gay troubadours expounded and explained the subtile metaphysics of love in every possible way: a peerless lady was supposed to unite every possible moral virtue with beauty and rank; and hence chivalric love was based on sentiment alone. Provence gave birth both to chivalry and poetry, and they were singularly blended together. Of about five hundred troubadours whose names have descended to us, more than half were noble, for chivalry took

cognizance only of noble birth. From Provence chivalry spread to Italy and to the north of France, and Normandy became pre-eminently a country of noble deeds, though not the land of song. It was in Italy that the poetical development was greatest.

After chivalry as an institution had passed away, it still left its spirit on society. There was not, however, much society in Europe anywhere until cities arose and became centres of culture and art. In the feudal castle there were chivalric sentiments but not society, where men and women of cultivation meet to give expression and scope to their ideas and sentiments. Nor can there be a high society without the aid of letters. Society did not arise until scholars and poets mingled with nobles as companions. This sort of society gained celebrity first in Paris, when women of rank invited to their salons literary men as well as nobles.

The first person who gave a marked impulse to what we call society was the Marquise de Rambouillet, in the seventeenth century. She was the first to set the fashion in France of that long series of social gatherings which were a sort of institution for more than two hundred years. Her father was a devoted friend of Henry IV., belonged to one of the first families of France, and had been ambassador to Rome. She was married in the year 1600, at the age of fifteen. When

twenty-two, she had acquired a distaste for the dissipations of the court and everything like crowded assemblies. She was among the first to discover that a crowd of men and women does not constitute society. Nothing is more foreign to the genius of the highest cultivated life than a crowded salon, where conversation on any interesting topic is impossible; where social life is gilded, but frivolous and empty; where especially the loftiest sentiments of the soul are suppressed. From an early period such crowds gathered at courts; but it was not till the seventeenth century that the salon arose, in which woman was a queen and an institution.

The famous queens of society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do not seem to have mixed much in miscellaneous assemblies, however brilliant in dress and ornament. They were more exclusive. They reserved their remarkable talents for social reunions, perhaps in modest salons, where among distinguished men and women they could pour out the treasures of the soul and mind; where they could inspire and draw out the sentiments of those who were gifted and distinguished. Madame du Deffand lived quietly in the convent of St. Joseph, but she gathered around her an elegant and famous circle, until she was eighty and blind. The Saturday assemblies of Mademoiselle de Scudéri, frequented by the most distinguished people

of Paris, were given in a modest apartment, for she was only a novelist. The same may be said of Madame de la Sablière's receptions, who was a childless widow, of moderate means. The Duchesse de Longueville — another of those famous queens — saw her best days in the abbey of Port Royal. Madame Récamier reigned in a small apartment in the Abbaye-au-Bcis. All these carried out in their salons the rules and customs which had been established by Madame de Rambouillet. It was in her salon that the French Academy originated, and its first members were regular visitants at her hotel. Her conversation was the chief amusement. We hear of neither cards nor music; but there were frequent parties to the country, walks in the woods,— a perpetual animation, where ceremony was banished. The brilliancy of her parties excited the jealousy of Richelieu. Hither resorted those who did not wish to be bound by the stiffness of the court. At that period this famous hotel had its pedantries, but it was severely intellectual. Hither came Mademoiselle de Scudéri; Mademoiselle de Montpensier, granddaughter of Henry IV.; Malherbe and Vaugelas, the poets; also Balzac, Voiture, Racan, the Duc de Montausier, Madame de Sévigné, Madame de la Fayette, and others. The most marked thing about this hotel was the patronage extended to men of letters. Those great French ladies welcomed poets and scholars, and encouraged them,

and did not allow them to starve, like the literary men of Grub Street. Had the English aristocracy extended the same helping hand to authors, the condition of English men of letters in the eighteenth century would have been far less unfortunate. Authors in France have never been excluded from high society; and this was owing in part to the influence of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, which sought an alliance between genius and rank. It is this blending of genius with rank which gave to society in France its chief attraction, and made it so brilliant.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri, Madame de la Sablière, and Madame de Longueville followed the precedents established by Madame de Rambouillet and Madame de Maintenon, and successively reigned as queens of society,—that is, of chosen circles of those who were most celebrated in France,—raising the intellectual tone of society, and inspiring increased veneration for woman herself.

But the most celebrated of all these queens of society was Madame Récamier, who was the friend and contemporary of Madame de Staël. She was born at Lyons, in 1777, not of high rank, her father, M. Bernard, being only a prosperous notary. Through the influence of Calonne, minister of Louis XVI., he obtained the lucrative place of Receiver of the Finances, and removed to Paris, while his only daughter Juliette was sent to a convent,

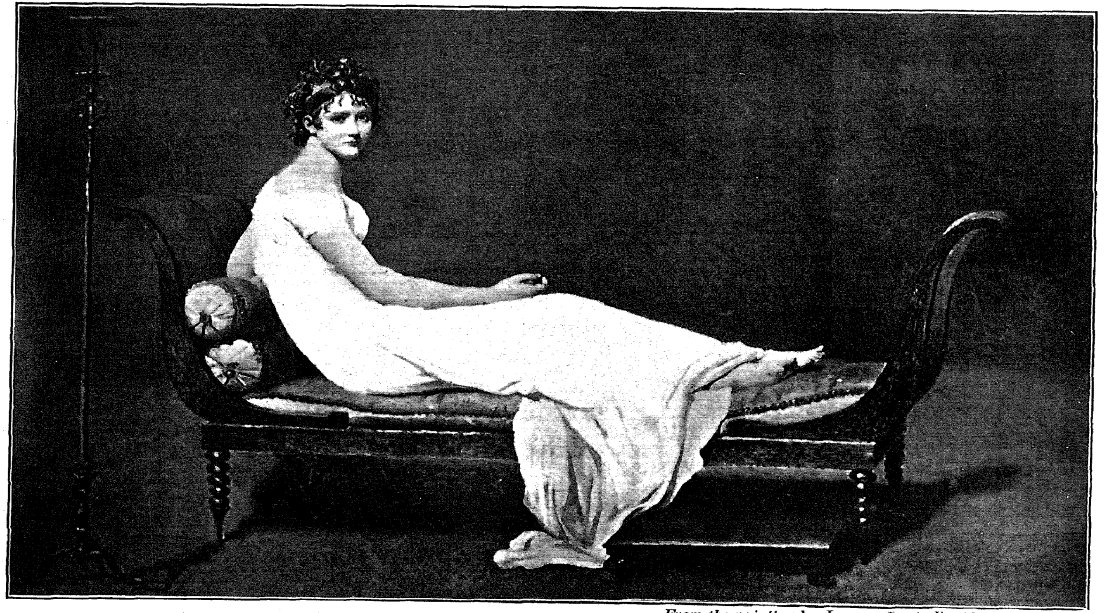
near Lyons, to be educated, where she remained until she was ten years of age, when she rejoined her family. Juliette's education was continued at home, under her mother's superintendence; but she excelled in nothing especially except music and dancing, and was only marked for grace, beauty, and good nature.

Among the visitors to her father's house was Jacques Rose Récamier, a rich banker, born in Lyons, 1751,—kind-hearted, hospitable, fine-looking, and cultivated, but of frivolous tastes. In 1793, during the Reign of Terror, being forty-two, he married the beautiful daughter of his friend, she being but fifteen. This marriage seems to have been one of convenience and vanity, with no ties of love on either side,—scarcely friendship, or even sentiment. For a few years Madame Récamier led a secluded life, on account of the troubles and dangers incident to the times, but when she did emerge from retirement she had developed into the most beautiful woman in France, and was devoted to a life of pleasure. Her figure was flexible and elegant, her head well poised, her complexion brilliant, with a little rosy mouth, pearly teeth, black curling hair, and soft expressive eyes, with a carriage indicative of indolence and pride, yet with a face beaming with good-nature and sympathy.

Such was Madame Récamier at eighteen, so remarkable for beauty that she called forth murmurs of

admiration wherever she appeared. As it had long been a custom in Paris, and still is, to select the most beautiful and winning woman to hand round the purse in churches for all charities, she was selected by the Church of St. Roche, the most fashionable church of that day; and so great was the enthusiasm to see this beautiful and bewitching creature, that the people crowded the church, and even mounted on the chairs, and, though assisted by two gentlemen, she could scarcely penetrate the crowd. The collection on one occasion amounted to twenty thousand francs, — equal, perhaps, to ten thousand dollars to-day. This adaptation of means to an end has never been disdained by the Catholic clergy. What would be thought in Philadelphia or New York, in an austere and solemn Presbyterian church, to see the most noted beauty of the day handing round the plate? But such is one of the forms which French levity takes, even in the consecrated precincts of the church.

The fashionable drive and promenade in Paris was Longchamps, now the Champs Élysées, and it was Madame Récamier's delight to drive in an open carriage on this beautiful avenue, especially on what are called the holy days, — Wednesdays and Fridays, — when her beauty extorted salutations from the crowd. Of course, such a woman excited equal admiration in the salons, and was soon invited to the fêtes and parties of the



From the painting by Jacques Louis David, in the Louvre

MME. DE RÉCAMIER

Directory, through Barras, one of her admirers. There she saw Bonaparte, but did not personally know him at that time. At one of these fêtes, rising at full length from her seat to gaze at the General, sharing in the admiration for the hero, she at once attracted the notice of the crowd, who all turned to look at her; which so annoyed Bonaparte that he gave her one of his dreadful and withering frowns, which caused her to sink into her seat with terror.

In 1798 M. Récamier bought the house which had belonged to Necker, in what is now the Chaussée d'Antin. This led to an acquaintance between Madame Récamier and Madame de Staël, which soon ripened into friendship. In the following year M. Récamier, now very rich, established himself in a fine château at Clichy, a short distance from Paris, where he kept open house. Thither came Lucien Bonaparte, at that time twenty-four years of age, bombastic and consequential, and fell in love with his beautiful hostess, as everybody else did. But Madame Récamier, with all her fascinations, was not a woman of passion; nor did she like the brother of the powerful First Consul, and politely rejected his addresses. He continued, however, to persecute her with his absurd love-letters for a year, when, finding it was hopeless to win so refined and virtuous a lady as Madame Récamier doubtless was, — partly because she was a woman of high principles,

and partly because she had no great temptations,— the pompous lover, then Home Minister, ceased his addresses.

But Napoleon, who knew everything that was going on, had a curiosity to see this woman who charmed everybody, yet whom nobody could win, and she was invited to one of his banquets. Although she obeyed his summons, she was very modest and timid, and did not try to make any conquest of him. She was afraid of him, as Madame de Staël was, and most ladies of rank and refinement. He was a hero to men rather than to women, — at least to those women who happened to know him or serve him. That cold and cutting irony of which he was master, that haughty carriage and air which he assumed, that selfish and unsympathetic nature, that exacting slavery to his will, must have been intolerable to well-bred women who believed in affection and friendship, of which he was incapable, and which he did not even comprehend. It was his intention that the most famous beauty of the day should sit next to him at this banquet, and he left the seat vacant for her; but she was too modest to take it unless specially directed to do so by the Consul, which either pride or etiquette prevented. This modesty he did not appreciate, and he was offended, and she never saw him again in private; but after he became Emperor, he made every effort to secure her services

as maid of honor to one of the princesses, through his minister Fouché, in order to ornament his court. It was a flattering honor, since she was only the wife of a banker, without title; but she refused it, which stung Napoleon with vexation, since it indicated to him that the fashionable and high-born women of the day stood aloof from him. Many a woman was banished because she would not pay court to him,—Madame de Staël, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and others. Madame Récamier was now at the height of fashion, admired by Frenchmen and foreigners alike; not merely by such men as the Montmorencys, Narbonne, Jordan, Barrère, Moreau, Bernadotte, La Harpe, but also by Metternich, then secretary of the Austrian embassy, who carried on a flirtation with her all winter. All this was displeasing to Napoleon, more from wounded pride than fear of treason. In the midst of her social triumphs, after having on one occasion received uncommon honor, Napoleon, now emperor, bitterly exclaimed that more honor could not be shown to the wife of a marshal of France, — a remark very indicative of his character, showing that in his estimation there was no possible rank or fame to be compared with the laurels of a military hero. A great literary genius, or woman of transcendent beauty, was no more to him than a great scholar or philosopher is to a vulgar rich man in making up his parties.

It was in the midst of these social successes that the husband of Madame Récamier lost his fortune. He would not have failed had he been able to secure a loan from the Bank of France of a million of francs; but this loan the Government peremptorily refused,—doubtless from the hostility of Napoleon; so that the banker was ruined because his wife chose to ally herself with the old aristocracy and refuse the favors of the Emperor. In having pursued such a course, Madame Récamier must have known that she was the indirect cause of her husband's failure. But she bore the reverse of fortune with that equanimity which seems to be peculiar to the French, and which only lofty characters, or people of considerable mental resources, are able to assume or feel. Most rich men, when they lose their money, give way to despondency and grief, conscious that they have nothing to fall back upon; that without money they are nothing. Madame Récamier at once sold her jewels and plate, and her fine hotel was offered for sale. Neither she nor her husband sought to retain anything amid the wreck, and they cheerfully took up their abode in a small apartment,—which conduct won universal sympathy and respect, so that her friends were rather increased than diminished, and she did not lose her social prestige and influence, which she would have lost in cities where money is the highest, and sometimes the only, test of social position.

Madame de Staël wrote letters of impassioned friendship, and nobles and generals paid unwonted attention. The death of her mother soon followed, so that she spent the summer of 1807 in extreme privacy, until persuaded by her constant friend Madame de Staël to pay her a visit at her country-seat near Geneva, where she met Prince Frederick of Prussia, nephew of the great Frederick, who became so enamored of her that he sought her hand in marriage. Princes, in those days, had such a lofty idea of their rank that they deemed it an honor to be conferred on a woman, even if married, to take her away from her husband. For a time Madame Récamier seemed dazzled with this splendid proposal, and she even wrote to the old banker, her husband, asking for a divorce from him. I think I never read of a request so preposterous or more disgraceful, — the greatest flaw I know in her character, — showing the extreme worldliness of women of fashion at that time, and the audacity which is created by universal flattery. What is even more surprising, her husband did not refuse the request, but wrote to her a letter of so much dignity, tenderness, and affection that her eyes were opened. "She saw the protector of her youth, whose indulgence had never failed her, growing old, and despoiled of fortune; and to leave him who had been so good to her, even if she did not love him, seemed rightly the height of ingratitude

and meanness." So the Prince was dismissed, very much to his surprise and chagrin; and some there were who regarded M. Récamier as a very selfish man, to appeal to the feelings and honor of his wife, and thus deprive her of a splendid destiny. Such were the morals of fashionable people in Europe during the last century.

Madame Récamier did not meddle with politics, like Madame de Staël and other strong-minded women before and since; but her friendship with a woman whom Napoleon hated so intensely as he did the authoress of "Delphine" and "Germany," caused her banishment to a distance of forty leagues from Paris, — one of the customary acts which the great conqueror was not ashamed to commit, and which put his character in a repulsive light. Nothing was more odious in the character of Napoleon than his disdain of women, and his harsh and severe treatment of those who would not offer incense to him. Madame de Staël, on learning of the Emperor's resentment towards her friend, implored her not to continue to visit her, as it would certainly be reported to the Government, and result in her banishment; but Madame Récamier would obey the impulses of friendship in the face of all danger. And the result was indeed her exile from that city which was so dear to her, as well as to all fashionable women and all gifted men.

In exile this persecuted woman lived in a simple way, first at Châlons and then at Lyons, for her means were now small. Her companions, however, were great people, as before her banishment and in the days of her prosperity, — in which fact we see some modification of the heartlessness which so often reigns in fashionable circles. Madame Récamier never was without friends as well as admirers. Her amiability, wit, good-nature, and extraordinary fascinations always attracted gifted and accomplished people of the very highest rank.

It was at Lyons that she formed a singular friendship, which lasted for life; and this was with a young man of plebeian origin, the son of a printer, with a face disfigured, and with manners uncouth, — M. Ballanche, whose admiration amounted to absolute idolatry, and who demanded no other reward for his devotion than the privilege of worship. To be permitted to look at her and listen to her was enough for him. Though ugly in appearance, and with a slow speech, he was well versed in the literature of the day, and his ideas were lofty and refined.

I have never read of any one who has refused an unselfish idolatry, the incense of a worshipper who has no outward advantage to seek or gain, — not even a king. If it be the privilege of a divinity to receive the homage of worshippers, why should a beautiful and

kind-hearted woman reject the respectful adoration of a man contented with worship alone? What could be more flattering even to a woman of the world, especially if this man had noble traits and great cultivation? Such was Ballanche, who viewed the mistress of his heart as Dante did his Beatrice, though not with the same sublime elevation, for the object of Dante's devotion was on the whole imaginary,—the worship of qualities which existed in his own mind alone,—whereas the admiration of Ballanche was based on the real presence of flesh and blood animated by a lovely soul.

Soon after this friendship had begun, Madame Récamier made a visit to Italy, travelling in a voiture, not a private carriage, and arrived at Rome in Passion Week, 1812, when the Pope was a prisoner of Napoleon at Fontainebleau, and hence when his capital was in mourning,—sad and dull, guarded and occupied by French soldiers. The only society at Rome in that eventful year which preceded the declining fortunes of Napoleon, was at the palace of Prince Torlonia the banker; but the modest apartment of Madame Récamier on the Corso was soon filled with those who detested the rule of Napoleon. Soon after, Ballanche came all the way from Lyons to see his star of worship, and she kindly took him everywhere, for even in desolation the Eternal City is the most interesting spot

on the face of the globe. From Rome she went to Naples (December, 1813), when the King Murat was forced into the coalition against his brother-in-law. In spite of the hatred of Napoleon, his sister the Queen of Naples was devoted to the Queen of Beauty, who was received at court as an ambassadress rather than as an exile. On the fall of Napoleon the next year the Pope returned from his thraldom; and Madame Récamier, being again in Rome, witnessed one of the most touching scenes of those eventful days, when all the nobles and gentry went out to meet their spiritual and temporal sovereign, and amid the exultant shouts and rapture of the crowd, dragged his gilded carriage to St. Peter's Church, where was celebrated a solemn *Te Deum*.

But Madame Récamier did not tarry long in Italy. She hastened back to Paris, for the tyrant was fallen. She was now no longer beaming in youthful charms, with groups of lovers at her feet, but a woman of middle age, yet still handsome,—for such a woman does not lose her beauty at thirty-five,—with fresh sources of enjoyment, and a keen desire for the society of intellectual and gifted friends. She now gave up miscellaneous society,—that is, fashionable and dissipated crowds of men and women in noisy receptions and ceremonious parties,—and drew around her the lines of a more exclusive circle. Hither came to see her Ballanche, now a resident of Paris, Mathieu de Mont-

morency, M. de Chateaubriand, the Duc de Broglie, and the most distinguished nobles of the ancient régime, with the literary lions who once more began to roar on the fall of the tyrant who had silenced them, including such men as Barante and Benjamin Constant. Also great ladies were seen in her salon, for her husband's fortunes had improved, and she was enabled again to live in her old style of splendor. Among these ladies were the Duchesse de Cars, the Marchionesses de Podences, Castellan, and d'Aguesseau, and the Princess-Royal of Sweden. Also distinguished foreigners sought her society, — Wellington, Madame Krüdener the friend of the Emperor Alexander, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, the Duke of Hamilton, and whoever was most distinguished in that brilliant circle of illustrious people who congregated at Paris on the restoration of the Bourbons.

In 1819 occurred the second failure of M. Récamier, which necessarily led again to a new and more humble style of life. The home which Madame Récamier now selected, and where she lived until 1838, was the Abbaye-au-Bois, while her father and her husband, the latter now sixty-nine, lived in a small lodging in the vicinity. She occupied in this convent — a large old building in the Rue de Sèvres — a small *appartement* in the third story, with a brick floor, and uneven at that. She afterwards removed to a

small *appartement* on the first floor, which looked upon the convent garden.

Here, in this seclusion, impoverished, and no longer young, Madame Récamier received her friends and guests. And they were among the most distinguished people of France, especially the Duc de Montmorency and the Viscount Chateaubriand. The former was a very religious man, and the breath of scandal never for a moment tainted his reputation, or cast any reproach on the memorable friendship which he cultivated with the most beautiful woman in France. This illustrious nobleman was at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was sent to the celebrated Congress of Vienna, where Metternich, the greatest statesman of the age, presided and inaugurated a reaction from the principles of the Revolution.

But more famous than he was Chateaubriand, then ambassador at London, and afterwards joined with Montmorency as delegate to the Congress of Vienna, and still later Minister of Foreign Affairs, who held during the reign of Louis XVIII. the most distinguished position in France as a statesman, a man of society, and a literary man. The author of the "Genius of Christianity" was aristocratic, moody, fickle, and vain, almost spoiled with the incense of popular idolatry. No literary man since Voltaire had received such incense. He was the acknowledged head of French

literature, a man of illustrious birth, noble manners, poetical temperament, vast acquisitions, and immense social prestige. He took sad and desponding views of life, was intensely conservative, but had doubtless a lofty soul as well as intellectual supremacy. He occupied distinct spheres, — was poet, historian, statesman, orator, and the oracle of fashionable salons, although he loved seclusion, and detested crowds. The virtues of his private life were unimpeached, and no man was more respected by the nation than this cultivated scholar and gentleman of the old school.

It was between this remarkable man and Madame Récamier that the most memorable friendship of modern times took place. It began in the year 1817 at the bedside of Madame de Staël, but did not ripen into intimacy until 1818, when he was fifty and she was forty-one. His genius and accomplishments soon conquered the first place in her heart; and he kept that place until his death in 1848, — thirty years of ardent and reproachless friendship. Her other friends felt great inquietude in view of this friendship, fearing that the incurable melancholy and fitful moods of the Viscount would have a depressing influence on her; but she could not resist his fascinations any easier than he could resist hers. The Viscount visited her every day, generally in the afternoon; and when absent on his diplomatic missions to the various foreign courts,

he wrote her, every day, all the details of his life, as well as sentiments. He constantly complained that she did not write as often as he did. His attachment was not prompted by that unselfish devotion which marked Ballanche, who sought no return, only the privilege of adoration. Chateaubriand was exacting, and sought a warmer and still increasing affection, which it seems was returned. Madame Récamier's nature was not passionate; it was simply affectionate. She sought to have the wants of her soul met. She rarely went to parties or assemblies, and seldom to the theatre. She craved friendship, and of the purest and loftiest kind. She was tired of the dissipation of society and even of flatteries, of which the Viscount was equally weary. The delusions of life were dispelled, in her case, at forty; in his, at fifty.

This intimacy reminds us of that of Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon. Neither could live without the other. But their correspondence does not reveal any improper intimacy. It was purely spiritual and affectionate; it was based on mutual admiration; it was strengthened by mutual respect for each other's moral qualities. And the friendship gave rise to no scandal; nor was it in any way misrepresented. Every day the statesman, when immersed even in the cares of a great office, was seen at her modest dwelling, at the same hour, — about four o'clock, — and no other

visitors were received at that hour. After unbending his burdened soul, or communicating his political plans, or detailing the gossip of the day, all to the end of securing sympathy and encouragement from a great woman, he retired to his own hotel, and spent the evening with his sick wife. One might suppose that his wife would have been jealous. The wife of Carlyle never would have permitted her husband to visit on such intimate terms the woman he most admired, — Lady Ashburton, — without a separation. But Chateaubriand's wife favored rather than discouraged the intimacy, knowing that it was necessary to his happiness. Nor did the friendship between Madame Récamier and the Duc de Montmorency, the political rival of Chateaubriand, weaken the love of the latter or create jealousy, a proof of his noble character. And when the pious Duke died, both friends gave way to the most sincere grief.

It was impossible for Madame Récamier to live without friendship. She could give up society and fortune, but not her friends. The friendly circle was not large, but, as we have said, embraced the leading men of France. Her limited means made no difference with her guests, since these were friends and admirers. Her attraction to men and women alike did not decrease with age or poverty.

The fall of Charles X., in 1830, led of course to the political downfall of Chateaubriand, and of many

of Madame Récamier's best friends. But there was a younger class of an opposite school who now came forward, and the more eminent of these were also frequent visitors to the old queen of society, — Ampère, Thiers, Mignet, Guizot, De Tocqueville, Sainte-Beuve. Nor did she lose the friendship, in her altered fortunes, of queens and nobles. She seems to have been received with the greatest cordiality in whatever château she chose to visit. Even Louis Napoleon, on his release from imprisonment in the castle of Ham, lost no time in paying his respects to the woman his uncle had formerly banished.

One of the characteristic things which this interesting lady did, was to get up a soirée in her apartments at the convent in aid of the sufferers of Lyons from an inundation of the Rhone, from which she realized a large sum. It was attended by the élite of Paris. Lady Byron paid a hundred francs for her ticket. The Duc de Noailles provided the refreshments, the Marquis de Verac furnished the carriages, and Chateaubriand acted as master of ceremonies. Rachel acted in the rôle of "Esther," not yet performed at the theatre, while Garcia, Rubini, and Lablache kindly gave their services. It was a very brilliant entertainment, one of the last in which Madame Récamier presided as a queen of society. It showed her kindness of heart, which was the most conspicuous trait of her character.

She wished to please, but she desired still more to be of assistance. The desire to please may arise from blended vanity and good-nature; the desire to be useful is purely disinterested. In all her intercourse with friends we see in Madame Récamier a remarkable power of sympathy. She was not a woman of genius, but of amazing tact, kindness, and amiability. She entered with all her heart into the private and confidential communications of her friends, and was totally free from egotism, forgetting herself in the happiness of others. If not a woman of genius, she had extraordinary good sense, and her advice was seldom wrong. It was this union of sympathy, kindness, tact, and wisdom which made Madame Récamier's friendship so highly prized by the greatest men of the age. But she was exclusive; she did not admit everybody to her salon, — only those whom she loved and esteemed, generally from the highest social circle. Sympathy cannot exist except among equals. We associate Paula with Jerome, the Countess Matilda with Hildebrand, Vittoria Colonna with Michael Angelo, Hannah More with Dr. Johnson. Friendship is neither patronage nor philanthropy; and the more exalted the social or political or literary position, the more rare friendship is and the more beautiful when it shines.

It was the friendships of Madame Récamier with distinguished men and women which made her famous

more than her graces and beauty. She soothed, encouraged, and fortified the soul of Chateaubriand in his fits of depression and under political disappointments, always herself cheerful and full of vivacity, — an angel of consolation and spiritual radiance. Her beauty at this period was moral rather than physical, since it revealed the virtues of the heart and the quickness of spiritual insight. In her earlier days — the object of universal and unbounded admiration, from her unparalleled charms and fascinations — she may have coquetted more than can be deemed decorous in a lady of fashion; but if so, it was vanity and love of admiration which were the causes. She never appealed to passion; for, as we have said, her own nature was not passionate. She was satisfied to be worshipped. The love of admiration is not often allied with that passion which loses self-control, and buries one in the gulf of mad infatuation. The mainspring of her early life was to please, and of her later life to make people happy. A more unselfish woman never lived. Those beauties who lure to ruin, as did the Sirens, are ever heartless and selfish, — like Cleopatra and Madame de Pompadour. There is nothing on this earth more selfish than what foolish and inexperienced people often mistake for love. There is nothing more radiant and inspiring than the moral beauty of the soul. The love that this creates is tender, sympathetic, kind,

and benevolent. Nothing could be more unselfish and beautiful than the love with which Madame Récamier inspired Ballanche, who had nothing to give and nothing to ask but sympathy and kindness.

One of the most touching and tender friendships ever recorded was the intercourse between Chateaubriand and Madame Récamier when they were both old and infirm. Nothing is more interesting than their letters and daily interviews at the convent, where she spent her latter days. She was not only poor, but she had also become blind, and had lost all relish for fashionable society, — not a religious recluse, saddened and penitent, like the Duchesse de Longueville in the vale of Chevreuse, but still a cheerful woman, fond of music, of animated talk, and of the political news of the day. Chateaubriand was old, disenchanted, disappointed, melancholy, and full of infirmities. Yet he never failed in the afternoon to make his appearance at the Abbaye, driven in a carriage to the threshold of the salon, where he was placed in an arm-chair and wheeled to a corner of the fireplace, when he poured out his sorrows and received consolation. Once, on one of those dreary visits, he asked his friend to marry him, — he being then seventy-nine and she seventy-one, — and bear his illustrious name. "Why," said she, "should we marry at our age? There is no impropriety in my taking care of you. If solitude is painful to

you, I am ready to live in the same house with you. The world will do justice to the purity of our friendship. Years and blindness give me this right. Let us change nothing in so perfect an affection."

The old statesman and historian soon after died, broken in mind and body, living long enough to see the fall of Louis Philippe. In losing this friend of thirty years Madame Récamier felt that the mainspring of her life was broken. She shed no tears in her silent and submissive grief, nor did she repel consolation or the society of friends, "but the sad smile which played on her lips was heart-rending. . . . While witnessing the decline of this noble genius, she had struggled, with singular tenderness, against the terrible effect of years upon him; but the long struggle had exhausted her own strength, and all motives for life were gone."

Though now old and blind, yet, like Mme. du Deffand at eighty, Madame Récamier's attractions never passed away. The great and the distinguished still visited her, and pronounced her charming to the last. Her vivacity never deserted her, nor her desire to make every one happy around her. She was kept interesting to the end by the warmth of her affections and the brightness of her mind. As it is the soul which is the glory of a woman, so the soul sheds its rays of imperishable light on the last pathway of existence. No beauty ever utterly passes away when animated by what is immortal.

Madame Récamier died at last of cholera, that disease which of all others she had ever most dreaded and avoided. On the 11th of May, 1849, amid weeping relatives and kneeling servants and sacerdotal prayers, this interesting woman passed away from earth. To her might be applied the eulogy of Burke on Marie Antoinette.

Madame Récamier's place in society has never since been filled with equal grace and fascination. She adopted the customs of the Hôtel de Rambouillet,—certain rules which good society has since observed. She discouraged the tête-à-tête in a low voice in a mixed company; if any one in her circle was likely to have especial knowledge, she would appeal to him with an air of deference; if any one was shy, she encouraged him; if a *mot* was particularly happy, she would take it up and show it to the company. Presiding in her own salon, she talked but little herself, but rather exerted herself to draw others out; without being learned, she exercised great judgment in her decisions when appeals were made to her as the presiding genius; she discouraged everything pedantic and pretentious; she dreaded exaggerations; she kept her company to the subject under discussion, and compelled attention; she would allow no slang; she insisted upon good-nature and amiability, which more than anything else marked society in the eighteenth century.

We read so much of those interesting reunions in the salons of distinguished people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that we naturally seek to know what constituted their peculiar charm. It seems to me to have been conversation, which is both an art and a gift. In these exclusive meetings women did not reign in consequence of their beauty so much as their wit. Their vivacity, intelligence, and tact, I may add also their good-nature, were a veil to cover up all eccentricities. It was when Madame du Deffand was eighty, and blind, that Horace Walpole pronounced her to be the most interesting woman in France. Madame de Stael, never beautiful, was the life of a party at forty-five; Madame Récamier was in her glory at fifty; Hannah More was most sought when she was sixty. There can be no high society where conversation is not the chief attraction; and men seldom learn to talk well when not inspired by gifted women. They may dictate like Dr. Johnson, or preach like Coleridge in a circle of admirers, or give vent to sarcasms and paradoxes like Carlyle; but they do not please like Horace Walpole, or dazzle like Wilkes, or charm like Mackintosh. When society was most famous at Paris, it was the salon — not the card table, or the banquet, or the ball — which was most sought by cultivated men and women, where conversation was directed by gifted women. Women are nothing in the social circle who cannot draw out

the sentiments of able men; and a man of genius gains more from the inspiration of one brilliant woman than from all the bookworms of many colleges. In society a bright and witty woman not merely shines, but she reigns. Conversation brings out all her faculties, and kindles all her sensibilities, and gives expression to her deepest sentiments. Her talk is more than music; it is music rising to the heights of eloquence. She is more even than an artist: she is a goddess before whom genius delights to burn its incense.

Success in this great art of conversation depends as much upon the disposition as upon the brains. The remarkable women who reigned in the salons of the last century were all distinguished for their good-nature, — good-nature based on toleration and kind feeling, rather than on insipid acquiescence. There can be no animated talk without dissent; and dissent should be disguised by the language of courtesy. As vanity is one of the mainsprings of human nature, and is nearly universal, the old queens of society had the tact to hide what could not easily be extirpated; and they were adepts in the still greater art of seeming to be unconscious. Those people are ever the most agreeable who listen with seeming curiosity, and who conceal themselves in order to feed the vanity of others. Nor does a true artist force his wit. "A confirmed punster is as great a bore as a patronizing moralist." More-

over, the life of society depends upon the general glow of the party, rather than the prominence of an individual, so that a brilliant talker will seek to bring out "the coincidence which strengthens conviction, or the dissent which sharpens sagacity, rather than individual experiences, which ever seem to be egotistical. In agreeable society all egotism is to be crushed and crucified. Even a man who is an oracle, if wise, will suggest, rather than seem to instruct. In a congenial party all differences in rank are for the time ignored. It is in bad taste to remind or impress people with a sense of their inferiority, as in chivalry all degrees were forgotten in an assemblage of gentlemen." Animated conversation amuses without seeming to teach, and transfers ideas so skilfully into the minds of others that they are ignorant of the debt, and mistake them for their own. It kindles a healthy enthusiasm, promotes good-nature, repels pretension, and rebukes vanity. It even sets off beauty, and intensifies its radiance. Said Madame de la Fayette to Madame de Sévigné: "Your varying expression so brightens and adorns your beauty, that there is nothing so brilliant as yourself: every word you utter adds to the brightness of your eyes; and while it is said that language impresses only the ear, it is quite certain that yours enchants the vision." "Like style in writing," says Lamartine, "conversation must flow

with ease, or it will oppress. It must be clear, or depth of thought cannot be penetrated; simple, or the understanding will be overtasked; restrained, or redundancy will satiate; warm, or it will lack soul; witty, or the brain will not be excited; generous, or sympathy cannot be roused; gentle, or there will be no toleration; persuasive, or the passions cannot be subdued." When it unites these excellences, it has an irresistible power, "musical as was Apollo's lyre;" a perpetual feast of nectared sweets, such as, I fancy, Socrates poured out to Athenian youth, or Augustine in the gardens of Como; an electrical glow, such as united the members of the Turk's Head Club into a band of brothers, or annihilated all distinctions of rank at the supper-table of the poet Scarron.

We cannot easily overrate the influence of those who inspire the social circle. They give not only the greatest pleasure which is known to cultivated minds, but kindle lofty sentiments. They draw men from the whirlpools of folly, break up degrading habits, dissipate the charms of money-making, and raise the value of the soul. How charming, how delightful, how inspiring is the eloquence which is kindled by the attrition of gifted minds! What privilege is greater than to be with those who reveal the experiences of great careers, especially if there be the absence of vanity and ostentation, and encouragement by those whose presence is

safety and whose smiles are an inspiration! It is the blending of the beatitudes of Bethany with the artistic enjoyments of Weimar, causing the favored circle to forget all cares, and giving them strength for those duties which make up the main business of human life.

When woman accomplishes such results she fills no ordinary sphere, she performs no ordinary mission; she rises in dignity as she declines in physical attractions. Like a queen of beauty at the tournament, she bestows the rewards which distinguished excellence has won; she breaks up the distinctions of rank; she rebukes the arrogance of wealth; she destroys pretensions; she kills self-conceit; she even gains consideration for her husband or brother, — for many a stupid man is received into a select circle because of the attractions of his wife or sister, even as many a silly woman gains consideration from the talents or position of her husband or brother. No matter how rich a man may be, if unpolished, ignorant, or rude, he is nobody in a party which seeks "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." He is utterly insignificant, rebuked, and humiliated, — even as a brainless beauty finds herself *de trop* in a circle of wits. Such a man may have consideration in the circle which cannot appreciate anything lofty or refined, but none in those upper regions where art and truth form subjects of discourse, where the æsthetic influences of the heart go forth to purify and exalt, where the soul is

refreshed by the communion of gifted and sympathetic companions, and where that which is most precious and exalted in a man or woman is honored and beloved. Without this influence which woman controls, "a learned man is in danger of becoming a pedant, a religious man a bigot, a vain man a fool, and a self-indulgent man a slave." No man can be truly genial unless he has been taught in the school where his wife, or daughter, or sister, or mother presides as a sun of radiance and beauty. It is only in this school that boorish manners are reformed, egotisms rebuked, stupidities punished, and cynicism exorcised.

But this exalting influence cannot exist in society without an attractive power in those ladies who compose it. A crowd of women does not necessarily make society, any more than do the empty, stupid, and noisy receptions which are sometimes held in the houses of the rich, — still less those silly, flippant, ignorant, pretentious, unblushing, and exacting girls who have just escaped from a fashionable school, who elbow their brothers into corners, and cover with confusion their fathers and mothers. A mere assemblage of men and women is nothing without the charms of refinement, vivacity, knowledge, and good-nature. These are not born in a day; they seldom mark people till middle life, when experiences are wide and feelings deep, when flippancy is not mistaken for wit, nor impertinence for

ease. A frivolous slave of dress and ornament can no more belong to the circle of which I now speak, than can a pushing, masculine woman to the sphere which she occasionally usurps. Not dress, not jewelry, not pleasing manners, not even innocence, is the charm and glory of society; but the wisdom learned by experience, the knowledge acquired by study, the quickness based on native genius. When woman has thus acquired these great resources, — by books, by travel, by extended intercourse, and by the soaring of an untrammelled soul, — then only does she shine and guide and inspire, and become, not the equal of man, but his superior, his mentor, his guardian angel, his star of worship, in that favored and glorious realm which is alike the paradise and the empire of the world!

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MADAME DE STAËL.

WOMAN IN LITERATURE.

A. D. 1766–1817.

MADAME DE STAËL.

WOMAN IN LITERATURE.

IT was two hundred years after woman began to reign in the great cities of Europe as queen of society, before she astonished the world by brilliant literary successes. Some of the most famous women who adorned society recorded their observations and experiences for the benefit of posterity; but these productions were generally in the form of memoirs and letters, which neither added to nor detracted from the splendid position they occupied because of their high birth, wit, and social fascinations. These earlier favorites were not courted by the great because they could write, but because they could talk, and adorn courts, like Madame de Sévigné. But in the eighteenth century a class of women arose and gained great celebrity on account of their writings, like Hannah More, Miss Burney, Mrs. Macaulay, Madame Dacier, Madame de la Fayette, — women who proved that they could do something more than merely write letters, for which

women ever have been distinguished from the time of Héloïse.

At the head of all these women of genius Madame de Staël stands pre-eminent, not only over literary women, but also over most of the men of letters in her age and country. And it was only a great age which could have produced such a woman, for the eighteenth century was more fruitful in literary genius than is generally supposed. The greatest lights, indeed, no longer shone, — such men as Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton, Corneille, Racine, Boileau, Molière, — but the age was fruitful in great critics, historians, philosophers, economists, poets, and novelists, who won immortal fame, like Pope, Goldsmith, Johnson, Addison, Gibbon, Bentley, Hume, Robertson, Priestley, Burke, Adam Smith, in England; Klopstock, Goethe, Herder, Schiller, Lessing, Handel, Schlegel, Kant, in Germany; and Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Marmontel, D'Alembert, Montesquieu, Rollin, Buffon, Lavoisier, Raynal, Lavater, in France, — all of whom were remarkable men, casting their fearless glance upon all subjects, and agitating the age by their great ideas. In France especially there was a notable literary awakening. A more brilliant circle than ever assembled at the Hôtel de Rambouillet met in the salons of Madame Geoffrin and Madame de Tencin and Madame du Deffand and Madame Necker, to discuss theories of government,

political economy, human rights, — in fact, every question which moves the human mind. They were generally irreligious, satirical, and defiant; but they were fresh, enthusiastic, learned, and original. They not only aroused the people to reflection, but they were great artists in language, and made a revolution in style.

It was in this inquiring, brilliant, yet infidel age that the star of Madame de Staël arose, on the eve of the French Revolution. She was born in Paris in 1766, when her father — Necker — was amassing an enormous fortune as a banker and financier, afterwards so celebrated as finance minister to Louis XVI. Her mother, — Susanne Curchod, — of humble Swiss parentage, was yet one of the remarkable women of the day; a lady whom Gibbon would have married had English prejudices and conventionalities permitted, but whose marriage with Necker was both fortunate and happy. They had only one child, but she was a Minerva. It seems that she was of extraordinary precocity, and very early attracted attention. As a mere child Marmontel talked with her as if she were twenty-five. At fifteen, she had written reflections on Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws," and was solicited by Raynal to furnish an article on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. So brilliant a girl was educated by her wealthy parents without regard to expense and

with the greatest care. She was fortunate from the start, with unbounded means, surrounded with illustrious people, and with every opportunity for improvement both as to teachers and society, — doubtless one important cause of her subsequent success, for very few people climb the upper rounds of the ladder of literary fame who are obliged to earn their living; their genius is fettered and their time is employed on irksome drudgeries.

Madame de Staël, when a girl, came very near losing her health and breaking her fine constitution by the unwise "cramming" on which her mother insisted; for, although a superior woman, Madame Necker knew very little about the true system of education, thinking that study and labor should be incessant, and that these alone could do everything. She loaded her daughter with too many restraints, and bound her by a too rigid discipline. She did all she could to crush genius out of the girl, and make her a dictionary, or a machine, or a piece of formality and conventionalism. But the father, wiser, and with greater insight and truer sympathy, relaxed the cords of discipline, unfettered her imagination, connived at her flights of extravagance, and allowed her to develop her faculties in her own way. She had a remarkable fondness for her father, — she adored him, and clung to him through life with peculiar tenderness and devotion, which he appreciated

and repaid. Before she was twenty she wrote poetry as a matter of course. Most girls do,—I mean those who are bright and sentimental; still, she produced but indifferent work, like Cicero when he was young, and soon dropped rhyme forever for the greater freedom of prose, into which she poured from the first all the wealth of her poetic soul. She was a poet, disdaining measure, but exquisite in rhythm,—for nothing can be more musical than her style.

As remarked in the lecture on Madame Récamier, it is seldom that people acquire the art of conversation till middle life, when the mind is enriched and confidence is gained. The great conversational powers of Johnson, Burke, Mackintosh, Coleridge, Wilkes, Garrick, Walpole, Sydney Smith, were most remarkable in their later years, after they had read everything and seen everybody. But Madame de Staël was brilliant in conversation from her youth. She was the delight of every circle, the admiration of the most gifted men,—not for her beauty, for she was not considered beautiful, but for her wit, her vivacity, her repartee, her animated and sympathetic face, her electrical power; for she could kindle, inspire, instruct, or bewitch. She played, she sang, she discoursed on everything,—a priestess, a sibyl, full of inspiration, listened to as an oracle or an idol. "To hear her," says Simond, "one would have said that she was the experience of many

souls mingled into one. I looked and listened with transport. I discovered in her features a charm superior to beauty; and if I do not hear her words, yet her tones, her gestures, and her looks convey to me her meaning." It is said that though her features were not beautiful her eyes were remarkable,—large, dark, lustrous, animated, flashing, confiding, and bathed in light. They were truly the windows of her soul; and it was her soul, even more than her intellect, which made her so interesting and so great. I think that intellect without soul is rather repulsive than otherwise, is cold, critical, arrogant, cynical, — something from which we flee, since we find no sympathy and sometimes no toleration from it. The soul of Madame de Staël immeasurably towered above her intellect, great as that was, and gave her eloquence, fervor, sincerity, poetry, — intensified her genius, and made her irresistible.

It was this combination of wit, sympathy, and conversational talent which made Madame de Staël so inordinately fond of society, — to satisfy longings and cravings that neither Nature nor books nor home could fully meet. With all her genius and learning she was a restless woman; and even friendship, for which she had a great capacity, could not bind her, or confine her long to any one place but Paris, which was to her the world, — not for its shops, or fashions, or churches, or

museums and picture-galleries, or historical monuments and memories, but for those coteries where blazed the great wits of the age, among whom she too would shine and dazzle and inspire. She was not without heart, as her warm and lasting friendships attest; but the animating passion of her life was love of admiration, which was only equalled by a craving for sympathy that no friendship could satisfy, — a want of her nature that reveals an ardent soul rather than a great heart; for many a warm-hearted woman can live contentedly in retirement, whether in city or country, — which Madame de Staël could not, not even when surrounded with every luxury and all the charms of nature.

Such a young lady as Mademoiselle Necker — so gifted, so accomplished, so rich, so elevated in social position — could aspire very high. And both her father and mother were ambitious for so remarkable a daughter. But the mother would not consent to her marriage with a Catholic, and she herself insisted on a permanent residence in Paris. It was hard to meet such conditions and yet make a brilliant match; for, after all, her father, though minister, was only a clever and rich Swiss financier, — not a nobleman, or a man of great family influence. The Baron de Staël-Holstein, then secretary to the Swedish embassy, afterwards ambassador from Sweden, was the most available

suitor, since he was a nobleman, a Protestant, and a diplomatist; and Mademoiselle Necker became his wife, in 1786, at twenty years of age, with a dowry of two millions of francs. Her social position was raised by this marriage, since her husband was a favorite at court, and she saw much of the Queen and of the great ladies who surrounded her.

But the marriage was not happy. The husband was extravagant and self-indulgent; the wife panted for beatitudes it was not in his nature to give. So they separated after a while, but were not divorced. Both before and after that event, however, her house was the resort of the best society of the city, and she was its brightest ornament. Thither came Grimm, Talleyrand, Barnave, Lafayette, Narbonne, Sieyès, — all friends. She was an eye-witness to the terrible scenes of the Revolution, and escaped judicial assassination almost by miracle. At last she succeeded in making her escape to Switzerland, and lived a while in her magnificent country-seat near Geneva, surrounded with illustrious exiles. Soon after, she made her first visit to England, but returned to Paris when the violence of the Revolution was over.

She returned the very day that Napoleon, as First Consul, had seized the reins of government, 1799. She had hailed the Revolution with transport, although she was so nearly its victim. She had faith in its ideas.

She believed that the people were the ultimate source of power. She condoned the excesses of the Revolution in view of its aspirations. Napoleon gained his first great victories in defence of its ideas. So at first, in common with the friends of liberty, she was prepared to worship this rising sun, dazzled by his deeds and deceived by his lying words. But she no sooner saw him than she was repelled, especially when she knew he had trampled on the liberties which he had professed to defend. Her instincts penetrated through all the plaudits of his idolaters. She felt that he was a traitor to a great cause, — was heartless, unboundedly ambitious, insufferably egotistic, a self-worshipper, who would brush away everything and everybody that stood in his way; and she hated him, and she defied him, and her house became the centre of opposition, the headquarters of enmity and wrath. What was his glory, as a conqueror, compared with the cause she loved, trodden under foot by an iron, rigid, jealous, irresistible despotism? Nor did Napoleon like her any better than she liked him, — not that he was envious, but because she stood in his way. He expected universal homage and devotion, neither of which would she give him. He was exceedingly irritated at the reports of her bitter sayings, blended with ridicule and sarcasm. He was not merely annoyed, he was afraid. "Her arrows," said he, "would hit a man if he were

seated on a rainbow." And when he found he could not silence her, he banished her to within forty leagues of Paris. He was not naturally cruel, but he was not the man to allow so bright a woman to say her sharp things about him to his generals and courtiers. It was not the worst thing he ever did to banish his greatest enemy; but it was mean and cruel to persecute her as he did after she was banished.

So from Paris — to her the "hub of the universe" — Madame de Staël, "with wandering steps and slow, took her solitary way." Expelled from the Eden she loved, she sought to find some place where she could enjoy society, — which was the passion of her life. Weimar, in Germany, then contained a constellation of illustrious men, over whom Goethe reigned, as Dr. Johnson once did in London. Thither she resolved to go, after a brief stay at Coppet, her place in Switzerland; and her ten years' exile began with a sojourn among the brightest intellects of Germany. She was cordially received at Weimar, especially by the Court, although the dictator of German literature did not like her much. She was too impetuous, impulsive, and masculine for him. Schiller and Wieland and Schlegel liked her better, and understood her better. Her great works had not then been written, and she had reputation chiefly for her high social position and social qualities. Possibly her



From the painting by Mlle. Godefroid, Versailles

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exceeding vivacity and wit seemed superficial, — as witty French people then seemed to both Germans and English. Doubtless there were critics and philosophers in Germany who were not capable of appreciating a person who aspired to penetrate all the secrets of art, philosophy, religion, and science then known; who tried to master everything, and who talked eloquently on everything, — and that person a woman, and a Frenchwoman. Goethe was indeed an exception to most German critics, for he was an artist, as few Germans have been in the use of language, and he, like Humboldt, had universal knowledge; yet he did not like Madame de Staël, — not from envy: he had too much self-consciousness to be envious of any man, still less a woman. Envy does not exist between the sexes: a musician may be jealous of a musician; a poet, of a poet; a theologian, of a theologian; and it is said, a physician has been known to be jealous of a physician. I think it is probable that the gifted Frenchwoman overwhelmed the great German with her prodigality of wit, sarcasm, and sentiment, for he was inclined to coldness and taciturnity.

Madame de Staël speaks respectfully of the great men she met at Weimar; but I do not think she worshipped them, since she did not fully understand them, — especially Fichte, whom she ridiculed, as well as other obscure though profound writers, who disdained

style and art in writing, for which she was afterwards so distinguished. I believe nine tenths of German literature is wasted on Europeans for lack of clearness and directness of style; although the involved obscurities which are common to German philosophers and critics and historians alike do not seem to derogate from their literary fame at home, and have even found imitators in England, like Coleridge and Carlyle. Nevertheless, obscurity and affectation are eternal blots on literary genius, since they are irreconcilable with art, which alone gives perpetuity to learning, — as illustrated by the classic authors of antiquity, and such men as Pascal, Rousseau, and Macaulay in our times, — although the pedants have always disdained those who write clearly and luminously, and lost reverence for genius the moment it is understood; since clear writing shows how little is truly original, and makes a disquisition on a bug, a comma, or a date seem trivial indeed.

Hitherto, Madame de Staël had reigned in salons, rather than on the throne of letters. Until her visit to Germany, she had written but two books which had given her fame, — one, "On Literature, considered in its Relations with Social Institutions," and a novel entitled "Delphine," — neither of which is much read or prized in these times. The leading idea of her book on literature was the perfectibility of human nature, — not

new, since it had been affirmed by Ferguson in England, by Kant in Germany, and by Turgot in France, and even by Roger Bacon in the Middle Ages. But she claimed to be the first to apply perfectibility to literature. If her idea simply means the ever-expanding progress of the human mind, with the aids that Providence has furnished, she is doubtless right. If she means that the necessary condition of human nature, unaided, is towards perfection, she wars with Christianity, and agrees with Rousseau. The idea was fashionable in its day, especially by the disciples of Rousseau, who maintained that the majority could not err. But if Madame de Staël simply meant that society was destined to progressive advancement, as a matter of fact her view will be generally accepted, since God rules this world, and brings good out of evil. Some maintain we have made no advance over ancient India in either morals or literature or science, or over Greece in art, or Rome in jurisprudence; and yet we believe the condition of humanity to-day is superior to what it has been, on the whole, in any previous age of our world. But let us give the credit of this advance to God, and not to man.

Her other book, "Delphine," published in 1802, made a great sensation, like a modern first-class novel, but was severely criticised. Sydney Smith reviewed it in a slashing article. It was considered by many as im-

moral in its tendency, since she was supposed to attack marriage. Sainte-Beuve, the greatest critic of the age, defends her against this charge; but the book was doubtless very emotional, into which she poured all the warmth of her ardent and ungoverned soul in its restless agitation and cravings for sympathy, — a record of herself, blasted in her marriage hopes and aspirations. It is a sort of New Héloïse, and, though powerful, is not healthy. These two works, however, stamped her as a woman of genius, although her highest triumphs were not yet won.

With the éclat of these two books she traversed Germany, studying laws, literature, and manners, assisted in her studies by Augustus Schlegel (the translator of Shakspeare), who was tutor to her children, on a salary of twelve thousand francs a year and expenses. She had great admiration for this distinguished scholar, who combined with his linguistic attainments an intense love of art and a profound appreciation of genius, in whatever guise it was to be found. With such a cicerone she could not help making great acquisitions. He was like Jerome explaining to Paula the history of the sacred places; like Dr. Johnson teaching ethics to Hannah More; like Michael Angelo explaining the principles of art to Vittoria Colonna. She mastered the language of which Frederick the Great was ashamed, and, for the first time, did justice to the German

scholars and the German character. She defended the ideal philosophy against Locke and the French materialists; she made a remarkable analysis of Kant; she warmly praised both Goethe and Schiller; she admired Wieland; she had a good word for Fichte, although she had ridiculed his obscurities of style.

The result of her travels was the most masterly dissertation on that great country that has ever been written, — an astonishing book, when we remember it was the first of any note which had appeared of its kind. To me it is more like the history of Herodotus than any book of travels which has appeared since that accomplished scholar traversed Asia and Africa to reveal to his inquisitive countrymen the treasures of Oriental monarchies. In this work, which is intellectually her greatest, she towered not only over all women, but over all men who have since been her competitors. It does not fall in with my purpose to give other than a passing notice of this masterly production in order to show what a marvellous woman she was, not in the realm of sentiment alone, not as a writer of letters, but as a critic capable of grasping and explaining all that philosophy, art, and literature have sought to accomplish in that *terra incognita*, as Germany was then regarded. She revealed a new country to the rest of Europe; she described with accuracy its manners and customs; she did justice to the

German intellect; she showed what amazing scholarship already existed in the universities, far surpassing both Paris and Oxford. She appreciated the German character, its simplicity, its truthfulness, its sincerity, its intellectual boldness, its patience, its reserved power, afterwards to be developed in war,—qualities and attainments which have since raised Germany to the foremost rank among the European nations.

This brilliant Frenchwoman, accustomed to reign in the most cultivated social circles of Paris, shows a remarkable catholicity and breadth of judgment, and is not shocked at phlegmatic dulness or hyperborean awkwardness, or laughable simplicity; because she sees, what nobody else then saw, a patience which never wearies, a quiet enthusiasm which no difficulty or disgust destroys, and a great insight which can give richness to literature without art, discrimination to philosophy without conciseness, and a new meaning to old dogmas. She ventures to pluck from the forbidden tree of metaphysics; and, reckless of the fiats of the schools, she entered fearlessly into those inquiries which have appalled both Greek and schoolman. Think of a woman making the best translation and criticism of Kant which had appeared until her day! Her revelations might have found more value in the eyes of pedants had she been more obscure. But, as Sir James Mackintosh says, "Dulness is not

accuracy, nor is an elegant writer necessarily superficial." Divest German metaphysics of their obscurities, and they might seem commonplace; take away the clearness of French writers, and they might pass for profound. Clearness and precision, however, are not what the world expects from its teachers. It loves the fig-trees with nothing but leaves; it adores the *stat magni nominis umbra.* The highest proof of severe culture is the use of short and simple words on any subject whatever; and he who cannot make his readers understand what he writes about does not understand his subject himself.

I am happy to have these views corroborated by one of the best writers that this country has produced, — I mean William Matthews: —

"The French, who if not the most original are certainly the acutest and most logical thinkers in the world, are frequently considered frivolous and shallow, simply because they excel all other nations in the difficult art of giving literary interest to philosophy; while, on the other hand, the ponderous Germans, who living in clouds of smoke have a positive genius for making the obscure obscurer, are thought to be original, because they are so chaotic and clumsy. But we have yet to learn that lead is priceless because it is weighty, or that gold is valueless because it glitters. The Damascus blade is none the less keen because it is polished, nor the Corinthian shaft less strong because it is fluted and its capital curved."

The production of such a woman, in that age, in which there is so much learning combined with eloquence, and elevation of sentiment with acute observation, and the graces of style with the spirit of philosophy, — candid, yet eulogistic; discriminating, yet enthusiastic, — made a great impression on the mind of cultivated Europe. Napoleon however, with inexcusable but characteristic meanness, would not allow its publication. The police seized the whole edition — ten thousand — and destroyed every copy. They even tried to get possession of the original copy, which required the greatest tact on the part of the author to preserve, and which she carried with her on all her travels, for six years, until it was finally printed in London.

Long before this great work was completed, — for she worked upon it six years, — Madame de Staël visited, with Sismondi, that country which above all others is dear to the poet, the artist, and the antiquarian. She entered that classic and hallowed land amid the glories of a southern spring, when the balmy air, the beautiful sky, the fresh verdure of the fields, and the singing of the birds added fascination to scenes which without them would have been enchantment. Chateaubriand, the only French writer of her day with whom she stood in proud equality, also visited Italy, but sang another song: she, bright and radiant,

with hope and cheerfulness, an admirer of the people and the country as they were; he, mournful and desponding, yet not less poetic, with visions of departed glory which the vast débris of the ancient magnificence suggested to his pensive soul. O Italy, Italy! land of associations, whose history never tires; whose antiquities are perpetual studies; whose works of art provoke to hopeless imitation; whose struggles until recently were equally chivalric and unfortunate; whose aspirations have ever been with liberty, yet whose destiny has been successive slaveries; whose hills and plains and vales are verdant with perennial loveliness, though covered with broken monuments and deserted cities; where monks and beggars are more numerous than even scholars and artists, — glory in debasement, and debasement in glory, reminding us of the greatness and misery of man; alike the paradise and the prison of the world; the Minerva and the Niobe of nations, — never shall thy wonders be exhausted or thy sorrows be forgotten!

> "E'en in thy desert what is like to thee?
> Thy very weeds are beautiful; thy wastes
> More rich than other lands' fertility;
> Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin grand."

In this unfortunate yet illustrious land, ever fresh to travellers, ever to be hallowed in spite of revolutions and assassinations, of popes and priests, of semi-infidel

artists and cynical savants, of beggars and tramps, of filthy hotels and dilapidated villas, Madame de Staël lingered more than a year, visiting every city which has a history and every monument which has antiquity; and the result of that journey was "Corinne," — one of the few immortal books which the heart of the world cherishes; which is as fresh to-day as it was nearly one hundred years ago, — a novel, a critique, a painting, a poem, a tragedy; interesting to the philosopher in his study and to the woman in her boudoir, since it is the record of the cravings of a great soul, and a description of what is most beautiful or venerated in nature or art. It is the most wonderful book ever written of Italy, — with faults, of course, but a transcript of profound sorrows and lofty aspirations. To some it may seem exaggerated in its transports; but can transports be too highly colored? Can any words be as vivid as a sensation? Enthusiasm, when fully expressed, ceases to be a rapture; and the soul that fancies it has reached the heights of love or beauty or truth, claims to comprehend the immortal and the infinite.

It is the effort of genius to express the raptures and sorrows of a lofty but unsatisfied soul, the glories of the imperishable in art and life, which gives to "Corinne" its peculiar charm. It is the mirror of a wide and deep experience, — a sort of "Divine Comedy," in which

a Dante finds a Beatrice, not robed in celestial loveliness, coursing from circle to circle and star to star, explaining the mysteries of heaven, but radiant in the beauty of earth, and glowing with the ardor of a human love. Every page is masculine in power, every sentence is condensed thought, every line burns with passion; yet every sentiment betrays the woman, seeking to reveal her own boundless capacities of admiration and friendship, to be appreciated, to be loved with that fervor and disinterestedness which she was prepared to lavish on the object of her adoration. No man could have made such revelations, although it may be given to him to sing a greater song. While no woman could have composed the "Iliad," or the "Novum Organum," or the "Critique of Pure Reason," or "Othello," no man could have written "Corinne" or "Adam Bede."

In painting Corinne, Madame de Staël simply describes herself, as she did in "Delphine," with all her restless soul-agitations; yet not in too flattering colors, since I doubt if there ever lived a more impassioned soul, with greater desires of knowledge, or a more devouring thirst for fame, or a profounder insight into what is lofty and eternal, than the author of "Corinne." Like Héloïse, she could love but one; yet, unlike Héloïse, she could not renounce, even for love, the passion for admiration or the fascinations of society.

She does not attempt to disguise the immense sacrifices which love exacts and marriage implies, but which such a woman as Héloïse is proud to make for him whom she deems worthy of her own exalted sentiments; and she shows in the person of Corinne how much weakness may coexist with strength, and how timid and dependent is a woman even in the blaze of triumph and in the enjoyment of a haughty freedom. She paints the most shrinking delicacy with the greatest imprudence and boldness, contempt for the opinions and usages of society with the severest self-respect; giving occasion for scandal, yet escaping from its shafts; triumphant in the greatness of her own dignity and in the purity of her unsullied soul. "Corinne" is a disguised sarcasm on the usages of society among the upper classes in Madame de Staël's day, when a man like Lord Neville is represented as capable of the most exalted passion, and almost ready to die for its object, and at the same time is unwilling to follow its promptings to an honorable issue, — ready even, at last, to marry a woman for whom he feels no strong attachment, or even admiration, in compliance with expediency, pride, and family interests.

But "Corinne" is not so much a romance as it is a description of Italy itself, its pictures, its statues, its palaces, its churches, its antiquities, its literature, its manners, and its aspirations; and it is astonishing how

much is condensed in that little book. The author has forestalled all poets and travellers, and even guide-books; all successive works are repetitions or amplifications of what she has suggested. She is as exhaustive and condensed as Thucydides; and, true to her philosophy, she is all sunshine and hope, with unbounded faith in the future of Italy, — an exultant prophet as well as a critical observer.

This work was published in Paris in 1807, when Napoleon was on the apex of his power and glory; and no work by a woman was ever hailed with greater enthusiasm, not in Paris merely, but throughout Europe. Yet nothing could melt the iron heart of Napoleon, and he continued his implacable persecution of its author, so that she was obliged to continue her travels, though travelling like a princess. Again she visited Germany, and again she retired to her place near Geneva, where she held a sort of court, the star of which, next to herself, was Madame Récamier, whose transcendent beauty and equally transcendent loveliness of character won her admiration and friendship.

In 1810 Madame de Staël married Rocca, of Italian or Spanish origin, who was a sickly and dilapidated officer in the French army, little more than half her age, — he being twenty-five and she forty-five, — a strange marriage, almost incredible, if such marriages were not frequent. He, though feeble, was an accom-

plished man, and was taken captive by the brilliancy of her talk and the elevation of her soul. It is harder to tell what captured her, for who can explain the mysteries of love? The marriage proved happy, however, although both parties dreaded ridicule, and kept it secret. The romance of the thing — if romance there was — has been equalled in our day by the marriages of George Eliot and Miss Burdett Coutts. Only very strong characters can afford to run such risks. The caprices of the great are among the unsolved mysteries of life. A poor, wounded, unknown young man would never have aspired to such an audacity had he not been sure of his ground; and the probability is that she, not he, is to be blamed for that folly, — if a woman is to be blamed for an attachment which the world calls an absurdity.

The wrath of Napoleon waxing stronger and stronger, Madame de Staël felt obliged to flee even from Switzerland. She sought a rest in England; but England was hard to be reached, as all the Continent save Russia was in bondage and fear. She succeeded in reaching Vienna, then Russia, and finally Sweden, where she lingered, as it was the fashion, to receive attentions and admiration from all who were great in position or eminent for attainments in the northern capitals of Europe. She liked even Russia; she saw good everywhere, something to praise and enjoy wherever she went. Moscow and

St. Petersburg were equally interesting, — the old and the new, the Oriental magnificence of the one, the stupendous palaces and churches of the other. Romanzoff, Orloff, the Empress Elizabeth, and the Emperor Alexander himself gave her distinguished honors and hospitalities, and she saw and recorded their greatness, and abandoned herself to pleasures which were new.

After a delightful winter in Stockholm, she sailed for England, where she arrived in safety, 1813, twenty years after her first visit, and in the ninth of her exile. Her reception in the highest circles was enthusiastic. She was recognized as the greatest literary woman who had lived. The Prince Regent sought her acquaintance; the greatest nobles fêted her in their princely palaces. At the house of the Marquis of Lansdowne, at Lord Jersey's, at Rogers's literary dinners, at the reunions of Holland House, everywhere, she was admired and honored. Sir James Mackintosh, the idol and oracle of English society at that time, pronounced her the most intellectual woman who had adorned the world, — not as a novelist and poet merely, but as philosopher and critic, grappling with the highest questions that ever tasked the intellect of man. Byron alone stood aloof; he did not like strong-minded women, any more than Goethe did, especially if they were not beautiful. But he was constrained to admire her at last. Nobody could re-

sist the fascination and brilliancy of her conversation. It is to be regretted that she did not write a book on England, which on the whole she admired, although it was a little too conventional for her. But she was now nearly worn out by the excitements and the sorrows of her life. She was no longer young. Her literary work was done. And she had to resort to opium to rally from the exhaustion of her nervous energies.

On the fall of Napoleon, Madame de Staël returned to Paris, — the city she loved so well; the city so dear to all Frenchmen and to all foreigners, to all gay people, to all intellectual people, to all fashionable people, to all worldly people, to all pious people, — to them the centre of modern civilization. Exile from this city has ever been regarded as a great calamity, — as great as exile was to Romans, even to Cicero. See with what eagerness Thiers himself returned to this charmed capital when permitted by the last Napoleon! In this city, after her ten years' exile, Madame de Staël reigned in prouder state than at any previous period of her life. She was now at home, on her own throne as queen of letters, and also queen of society. All the great men who were then assembled in Paris burned their incense before her, — Chateaubriand, Lafayette, Talleyrand, Guizot, Constant, Cuvier, Laplace. Distinguished foreigners

swelled the circle of her admirers,— Blucher, Humboldt, Schlegel, Canova, Wellington, even the Emperor of Russia. The Restoration hailed her with transport; Louis XVIII. sought the glory of her talk; the press implored her assistance; the salons caught inspiration from her presence. Never was woman seated on a prouder throne. But she did not live long to enjoy her unparalleled social honors. She was stifled, like Voltaire, by the incense of idolaters; the body could no longer stand the strain of the soul, and she sunk, at the age of fifty-one, in the year 1817, a few months before her husband Rocca, whom, it appears, she ever tenderly loved.

Madame de Staël died prematurely, as precocious people generally do, — like Raphael, Pascal, Schiller, I may add Macaulay and Mill; but she accomplished much, and might have done more had her life been spared, for no one doubts her genius, — perhaps the most remarkable female writer who has lived, on the whole. George Sand is the only Frenchwoman who has approached her in genius and fame. Madame de Staël was novelist, critic, essayist, and philosopher, grasping the profoundest subjects, and gaining admiration in everything she attempted. I do not regard her as pre-eminently a happy woman, since her marriages were either unfortunate or unnatural. In the intoxicating blaze of triumph and admiration she panted for

domestic beatitudes, and found the earnest cravings of her soul unsatisfied. She sought relief from herself in society, which was a necessity to her, as much as friendship or love; but she was restless, and perpetually travelling. Moreover, she was a persecuted woman during the best ten years of her life. She had but little repose of mind or character, and was worldly, vain, and ambitious. But she was a great woman and a good woman, in spite of her faults and errors; and greater in her womanly qualities than she was in her writings, remarkable as these were. She had a great individuality, like Dr. Johnson and Thomas Carlyle. And she lives in the hearts of her countrymen, like Madame Récamier; for it was not the beauty and grace of this queen of society which made her beloved, but her good-nature, amiability, power of friendship, freedom from envy, and generous soul.

In the estimation of foreigners — of those great critics of whom Jeffrey and Mackintosh were the representatives — Madame de Staël has won the proud fame of being the most powerful writer her country has produced since Voltaire and Rousseau. Historically she is memorable for inaugurating a new period of literary history. With her began a new class of female authors, whose genius was no longer confined to letters and memoirs and sentimental novels. I need not enumerate the long catalogue of

illustrious literary women in the nineteenth century in France, in Germany, in England, and even in the United States. The greatest novelist in England, since Thackeray, was a woman. One of the greatest writers on political economy, since Adam Smith, was a woman. One of the greatest writers in astronomical science was a woman. In America, what single novel ever equalled the success of "Uncle Tom's Cabin"? What schools are better kept than those by women? And this is only the beginning, since it is generally felt that women are better educated than men, outside of the great professions. And why not, since they have more leisure for literary pursuits than men? Who now sneers at the intellect of a woman? Who laughs at blue-stockings? Who denies the insight, the superior tact, the genius of woman? What man does not accept woman as a fellow-laborer in the field of letters? And yet there is one profession which they are more capable of filling than men,—that of physicians to their own sex; a profession most honorable, and requiring great knowledge, as well as great experience and insight.

Why may not women cope with men in the proudest intellectual tournaments? Why should they not become great linguists, and poets, and novelists, and artists, and critics, and historians? Have they not quickness, brilliancy, sentiment, acuteness of observation, good sense, and even genius? Do not well-

educated women speak French before their brothers can translate the easiest lines of Virgil? I would not put such gentle, refined, and cultivated creatures, — these flowers of Paradise, spreading the sweet aroma of their graces in the calm retreats from toil and sin, — I would not push them into the noisy arena of wrangling politics, into the suffocating and impure air of a court of justice, or even make them professors in a college of unruly boys; but because I would not do them this great cruelty, do I deny their intellectual equality, or seek to dim the lustre of the light they shed, or hide their talents under the vile bushel of envy, cynicism, or contempt? Is it paying true respect to woman to seek to draw her from the beautiful sphere which she adorns and vivifies and inspires, — where she is a solace, a rest, a restraint, and a benediction, — and require of her labors which she has not the physical strength to perform? And when it is seen how much more attractive the wives and daughters of favored classes have made themselves by culture, how much more capable they are of training and educating their children, how much more dignified the family circle may thus become, — every man who is a father will rejoice in this great step which women have recently made, not merely in literary attainments, but in the respect of men. Take away intellect from woman, and what is she but a toy or a slave? For

my part, I see no more cheering signs of the progress of society than in the advancing knowledge of favored women. And I know of no more splendid future for them than to encircle their brows, whenever they have an opportunity, with those proud laurels which have ever been accorded to those who have advanced the interests of truth and the dominion of the soul,—which laurels they have lately won, and which both reason and experience assure us they may continue indefinitely to win.

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HANNAH MORE.

EDUCATION OF WOMAN.

A. D. 1745-1833.

HANNAH MORE.

EDUCATION OF WOMAN.

ONE of the useful and grateful tasks of historians and biographers is to bring forward to the eye of every new generation of men and women those illustrious characters who made a great figure in the days of their grandfathers and grandmothers, yet who have nearly faded out of sight in the rush of new events and interests, and the rise of new stars in the intellectual firmament. Extraordinary genius or virtue or services may be forgotten for a while, but are never permanently hidden. There is always somebody to recall them to our minds, whether the interval be short or long. The Italian historian Vico wrote a book which attracted no attention for nearly two hundred years, — in fact, was forgotten, — but was made famous by the discoveries of Niebuhr in the Vatican library, and became the foundation of modern philosophical history. Some great men pass out of view for a generation or two owing to the bitterness of contem-

poraneous enemies and detractors, and others because of the very unanimity of admirers and critics, leading to no opposition. We weary both of praise and censure. And when either praise or censure stops, the object of it is apparently forgotten for a time, except by the few who are learned. Yet, I repeat, real greatness or goodness is never completely hidden. It reappears with new lustre when brought into comparison with those who are embarked in the same cause.

Thus the recent discussions on the education of women recall to our remembrance the greatest woman who lived in England in the latter part of the last century, — Hannah More, — who devoted her long and prosperous and honorable life to this cause both by practical teaching and by writings which arrested the attention and called forth the admiration of the best people in Europe and America. She forestalled nearly everything which has been written in our times pertaining to the life of woman, both at school and in society. And she evinced in her writings on this great subject an acuteness of observation, a good sense, a breadth and catholicity of judgment, a richness of experience, and a high moral tone which have never been surpassed. She reminds us of the wise Madame de Maintenon in her school at St. Cyr; the pious and philanthropic Mary Lyon at the Mount Holyoke Seminary; and the more superficial and worldly, but truly benevolent and

practical, Emma Willard at her institution in Troy,— the last two mentioned ladies being the pioneers of the advanced education for young ladies in such colleges as Vassar, Wellesley, and Smith, and others I could mention. The wisdom, tact, and experience of Madame de Maintenon — the first great woman who gave a marked impulse to female education in our modern times — were not lost on Hannah More, who seems to have laid down the laws best adapted to develop the mind and character of woman under a high civilization. England seems to have been a century in advance of America, both in its wisdom and folly; and the same things in London life were ridiculed and condemned with unsparing boldness by Hannah More which to-day, in New York, have called out the vigorous protests of Dr. Morgan Dix. The educators of our age and country cannot do better than learn wisdom from the "Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education," as well as the "Thoughts on the Manners of the Great," which appeared from the pen of Hannah More in the latter part of the 18th century, in which she appears as both moralist and teacher, getting inspiration not only from her exalted labors, but from the friendship and conversation of the great intellectual oracles of her age. I have not read of any one woman in England for the last fifty years, I have not heard or known of any one woman in the United States, who ever occupied the

exalted position of Hannah More, or who exercised so broad and deep an influence on the public mind in the combined character of a woman of society, author, and philanthropist. There have been, since her day, more brilliant queens of fashion, greater literary geniuses, and more prominent philanthropists; but she was enabled to exercise an influence superior to any of them, by her friendship with people of rank, by her clear and powerful writings, and by her lofty piety and morality, which blazed amid the vices of fashionable society one hundred years ago.

It is well to dwell on the life and labors of so great and good a woman, who has now become historical. But I select her especially as the representative of the grandest moral movement of modern times, — that which aims to develop the mind and soul of woman, and give to her the dignity of which she has been robbed by paganism and "philistinism." I might have selected some great woman nearer home and our own time, more intimately connected with the profession of educating young ladies; but I prefer to speak of one who is universally conceded to have rendered great service to her age and country. It is doubly pleasant to present Hannah More, because she had none of those defects and blemishes which have often detracted from the dignity of great benefactors. She was about as perfect a woman as I have read of; and her virtues

were not carried out to those extremes of fanaticism which have often marked illustrious saints, from the want of common-sense or because of visionary theories. Strict and consistent as a moralist, she was never led into any extravagances or fanaticisms. Stern even as a disciplinarian, she did not proscribe healthy and natural amusements. Strong-minded, — if I may use a modern contemptuous phrase, — she never rebelled against the ordinances of nature or the laws dictated by inspiration. She was a model woman: beautiful, yet not vain; witty, yet never irreverent; independent, yet respectful to authority; exercising private judgment, yet admired by bishops; learned, without pedantry; hospitable, without extravagance; fond of the society of the great, yet spending her life among the poor; alive to the fascinations of society, yet consecrating all her energies of mind and body to the good of those with whom she was brought in contact; as capable of friendship as Paula, as religious as Madame Guyon, as charming in conversation as Récamier, as practical as Elizabeth, as broad and tolerant as Fénelon, who was himself half woman in his nature, as the most interesting men of genius are apt to be. Nothing cynical, or bitter, or extravagant, or contemptuous appears in any of her writings, most of which were published anonymously, — from humility as well as sensitiveness. Vanity was a stranger to her, as well as arrogance and pride. Embarking in

great enterprises, she never went outside the prescribed sphere of woman. Masculine in the force and vigor of her understanding, she was feminine in all her instincts, — proper, amiable, and gentle; a woman whom everybody loved and everybody respected, even to kings and queens.

Hannah More was born in a little village near Bristol, 1745, and her father was the village schoolmaster. He had been well educated, and had large expectations; but he was disappointed, and was obliged to resort to this useful but irksome way of getting a living. He had five daughters, of whom Hannah was the fourth. As a girl, she was very precocious in mind, as well as beautiful and attractive in her person. She studied Latin when only eight years of age. Her father, it would seem, was a very sensible man, and sought to develop the peculiar talents which each of his daughters possessed, without the usual partiality of parents, who are apt to mistake inclination for genius. Three of the girls had an aptitude for teaching, and opened a boarding-school in Bristol when the oldest was only twenty. The school was a great success, and soon became fashionable, and ultimately famous. To this school the early labors of Hannah More were devoted; and she soon attracted attention by her accomplishments, especially in the modern languages, in which she conversed with great accuracy and facility. But her talents were more re-

markable than her accomplishments; and eminent men sought her society and friendship, who in turn introduced her to their own circle of friends, by all of whom she was admired. Thus she gradually came to know the celebrated Dean Tucker of Gloucester cathedral; Ferguson the astronomer, then lecturing at Bristol; the elder Sheridan, also giving lectures on oratory in the same city; Garrick, on the eve of his retirement from the stage; Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Mrs. Montagu, in whose salon the most distinguished men of the age assembled as the headquarters of fashionable society, — Edmund Burke, then member for Bristol in the House of Commons; Gibbon; Alderman Cadell, the great publisher; Bishop Porteus; Rev. John Newton; and Sir James Stonehouse, an eminent physician. With all these stars she was on intimate terms, visiting them at their houses, received by them all as more than an equal, — for she was not only beautiful and witty, but had earned considerable reputation for her poetry. Garrick particularly admired her as a woman of genius. and performed one of her plays ("Percy") twenty successive nights at Drury Lane, writing himself both the prologue and the epilogue. It must be borne in mind that when first admitted to the choicest society of London, — at the houses not merely of literary men, but of great statesmen and nobles like Lord Camden, Lord Spencer, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Pembroke,

Lord Granville, and others,— she was teaching in a girls' school at Bristol, and was a young lady under thirty years of age.

It was as a literary woman — when literary women were not so numerous or ambitious as they now are — that Hannah More had the entrée into the best society under the patronage of the greatest writers of the age. She was a literary lion before she was twenty-five. She attracted the attention of Sheridan by her verses when she was scarcely eighteen. Her "Search after Happiness" went through six editions before the year 1775. Her tragedy of "Percy" was translated into French and German before she was thirty; and she realized from the sale of it £600. "The Fatal Falsehood" was also much admired, but did not meet the same success, being cruelly attacked by envious rivals. Her "Bas Bleu" was praised by Johnson in unmeasured terms. It was for her poetry that she was best known from 1775 to 1785, the period when she lived in the fashionable and literary world, and which she adorned by her wit and brilliant conversation, — not exactly a queen of society, since she did not set up a salon, but was only an honored visitor at the houses of the great; a brilliant and beautiful woman, whom everybody wished to know.

I will not attempt any criticism on those numerous poems. They are not much read and valued in our

time. They are all after the style of Johnson and Pope, — the measured and artificial style of the eighteenth century, in imitation of the ancient classics and of French poetry, in which the wearisome rhyme is the chief peculiarity, — smooth, polished, elaborate, but pretty much after the same pattern, and easily imitated by school-girls. The taste of this age — created by Burns, Byron, Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, and others — is very different. But the poems of Hannah More were undoubtedly admired by her generation, and gave her great éclat and considerable pecuniary emolument. And yet her real fame does not rest on those artificial poems, respectable as they were one hundred years ago, but on her writings as a moralist and educator.

During this period of her life — from 1775 to 1785 — she chiefly resided with her sisters in Bristol, but made long visits to London, and to the houses of famous or titled personages. In a worldly point of view these years were the most brilliant, but not most useful, period of her life. At first she was intoxicated by the magnificent attentions she received, and had an intense enjoyment of cultivated society. It was in these years she formed the most ardent friendships of her life. Of all her friends, she seems to have been most attached to Garrick, — the idol of society, a general favorite wherever he chose to go, a man of irreproachable

morals and charming conversational powers; at whose house and table no actor or actress was ever known to be invited, except in one solitary instance; from which it would appear that he was more desirous of the attentions of the great than of the sympathy and admiration of the people of his own profession. It is not common for actors to be gifted with great conversational powers, any more than for artists, as a general thing, to be well-read people, especially in history. Hannah More was exceedingly intimate with both Garrick and his wife; and his death, in 1779, saddened and softened his great worshipper. After his death she never was present at any theatrical amusement. She would not go to the theatre to witness the acting of her own dramas; not even to see Mrs. Siddons, when she appeared as so brilliant a star. In fact, after Garrick's death Miss More partially abandoned fashionable society, having acquired a disgust of its heartless frivolities and seductive vices.

With the death of Garrick a new era opened in the life of Hannah More, although for the succeeding five years she still was a frequent visitor in the houses of those she esteemed, both literary lions and people of rank. It would seem, during this period, that Dr. Johnson was her warmest friend, whom she ever respected for his lofty moral nature, and before whom she bowed down in humble worship as an intellectual

dictator. He called her his child. Sometimes he was severe on her, when she differed from him in opinion, or when caught praising books which he, as a moralist, abhorred, — like the novels of Fielding and Smollet; for the only novelist he could tolerate was Richardson. Once when she warmly expatiated in praise of the Jansenists, the overbearing autocrat exclaimed in a voice of thunder: "Madam, let me hear no more of this! Don't quote your popish authorities to me; I want none of your popery!" But seeing that his friend was overwhelmed with the shock he gave her, his countenance instantly changed; his lip quivered, and his eyes filled with tears. He gently took her hand, and with the deepest emotion exclaimed: "Child, never mind what I have said, — follow true piety wherever you find it." This anecdote is a key to the whole character of Johnson, interesting and uninteresting; for this rough, tyrannical dogmatist was also one of the tenderest of men, and had a soul as impressible as that of a woman.

The most intimate woman friend, it would seem, that Hannah ever had was Mrs. Garrick, both before and after the death of her husband; and the wife of Garrick was a Roman Catholic. Hannah More usually spent several months with this accomplished and warm-hearted woman at her house in Hampton, generally from March to July. This was often her home

during the London season, after which she resided in Bristol with her sisters, who made a fortune by their boarding-school. After Hannah had entered into the literary field she supported herself by her writings, which until 1785 were chiefly poems and dramas,—now almost forgotten, but which were widely circulated and admired in her day, and by which she kept her position in fashionable and learned society. After the death of Garrick, as we have said, she seemed to have acquired a disgust of the gay and fashionable society which at one time was so fascinating. She found it frivolous, vain, and even dull. She craved sympathy and intellectual conversation and knowledge. She found neither at a fashionable party, only outside show, gay dresses, and unspeakable follies,—no conversation; for how could there be either the cultivation of friendship or conversation in a crowd, perchance, of empty people for the most part? "As to London," says she, "I shall be glad to get out of it; everything is great and vast and late and magnificent and dull. I very seldom go to these parties, and I always repent when I do. My distaste of these scenes of insipid magnificence I have not words to tell. Every faculty but the sight is starved, and that has a surfeit. I like conversation parties of the right sort, whether of four persons or forty; but it is impossible to talk when two or three hundred people are con-



After the painting by H. W. Pickersgill, A.R.A.

HANNAH MORE

tinually coming in and popping out, or nailing themselves to a card table. Conceive," said she, "of the insipidity of two or three hundred people, — all dressed in the extremity of fashion, painted as red as bacchanals, poisoning the air with perfumes, treading on each other's dresses, not one in ten able to get a chair when fainting with weariness. I never now go to these things when I can possibly avoid it, and stay when there as few minutes as I can." Thus she wrote as early as 1782. She went through the same experience as did Madame Récamier, learning to prefer a small and select circle, where conversation was the chief charm, especially when this circle was composed only of gifted men and women. In this incipient disgust of gay and worldly society — chiefly because it improved neither her mind nor her morals, because it was stupid and dull, as it generally is to people of real culture and high intelligence — she seems to have been gradually drawn to the learned prelates of the English Church, — like Dr. Porteus, Bishop of Chester, afterwards of London; the Bishop of St. Asaph; and Dr. Horne, then Dean of Canterbury. She became very intimate with Wilberforce and Rev. John Newton, while she did not give up her friendship for Horace Walpole, Pepys, and other lights of the social world.

About this time (1785) she retired to Cowslip Green,

a pretty cottage ten miles from Bristol, and spent her time in reading, writing, and gardening. The country, with its green pastures and still waters, called her back to those studies and duties which are most ennobling, and which produce the most lasting pleasure. In this humble retreat she had many visitors from among her illustrious friends. She became more and more religious, without entirely giving up society; corresponding with the eminent men and women she visited, especially Mrs. Montagu, Dr. Porteus, Mrs. Boscawen, Mr. Pepys, and Rev. John Newton. In the charming seclusion of Cowslip Green she wrote her treatise on the "Manners of the Great;" the first of that series in which she rebuked the fashions and follies of the day. It had an immense circulation, and was published anonymously. This very popular work was followed, in 1790, by a volume on an "Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World," which produced a still deeper sensation among the great, and was much admired. The Bishop of London (Porteus) was full of its praises; so was John Newton, although he did not think that any book could wean the worldly from their pleasures.

Thus far most of the associations of Hannah More had been with the fashionable world, by which she was petted and flattered. Seeing clearly its faults, she had sought to reform it by her writings and by

her conversation. But now she turned her attention to another class, — the poor and ignorant, — and labored for them. She instituted a number of schools for the poor in her immediate neighborhood, superintended them, raised money for them, and directed them, as Madame de Maintenon did the school of St. Cyr; only with this difference, — that while the Frenchwoman sought to develop the mind and character of a set of aristocratic girls to offset the practical infidelity that permeated the upper walks of life, Hannah More desired to make the children of the poor religious amid the savage profligacy which then marked the peasant class. The first school she established was at Cheddar, a wild and sunless hollow, amid yawning caverns, about ten miles from Cowslip Green, — the resort of pleasure parties for its picturesque cliffs and fissures. Around this weird spot was perhaps the most degraded peasantry to be found in England, without even spiritual instruction, — for the vicar was a non-resident, and his living was worth but £50 a year. In her efforts to establish a school in such a barbarous and pagan locality Hannah met with serious obstacles. The farmers and petty landholders were hostile to her scheme, maintaining that any education would spoil the poor, and make them discontented. Even the farmers themselves were an ignorant and brutal class, very depraved, and with

intense prejudices. For a whole year she labored with them to disarm their hostilities and prejudices, and succeeded at last in collecting two hundred and fifty children in the schoolhouse which she had built. Their instruction was of course only elemental, but it was religious.

From Cheddar, Hannah More was led to examine into the condition of neighboring places. Thirteen contiguous parishes were without a resident curate, and nine of these were furnished with schools, with over five hundred scholars. Her theory was, — a suitable education for each, and a Christian education for all. While she was much encouraged by her ecclesiastical aristocratic friends, she still encountered great opposition from the farmers. She also excited the jealousy of the Dissenters for thus invading the territory of ignorance. All her movements were subjected to prelates and clergymen of the Church of England for their approval; for she put herself under their patronage. And yet the brutal ignorance of the peasantry was owing in part to the neglect of these very clergymen, who never visited these poor people under their charge. As an excuse for them, it may be said that at that time there were 4,809 parishes in England and Wales in which a clergyman could not reside, if he would, for lack of a parsonage. At that time, even in Puritan New England, every minister

was supposed to live in a parsonage. To-day, not one parish in ten is provided with that desirable auxiliary.

Not only were the labors of Hannah More extended to the ignorant and degraded by the establishment of schools in her neighborhood, at an expense of about £1,000 a year, part of which she contributed herself, but she employed her pen in their behalf, writing, at the solicitation of the Bishop of London, a series of papers or tracts for the times, with special reference to the enlightenment of the lower classes on those subjects that were then agitating the country. The whole land was at this time inundated with pamphlets full of infidelity and discontent, fanned by the French Revolution, then passing through its worst stages of cruelty, atheism, and spoliation. Burke about the same time wrote his "Reflections," which are immortal for their wisdom and profundity; but he wrote for the upper classes, not merely in England, but in America and on the continent of Europe. Hannah More wrote for the lower classes, and in a style of great clearness and simplicity. Her admirable dialogue, called "Village Politics," by Will Chip, a country carpenter, exposed the folly and atrocity of the revolutionary doctrines then in vogue. Its circulation was immense. The Government purchased several thousand copies for distribution. It was translated into French and Italian.

Similar in spirit was the tract in reply to the infidel speech of M. Dupont in the French Convention, in which he would divorce all religion from education. The circulation of this tract was also very great. These were followed, in 1795, by the "Cheap Repository," a periodical designed for the poor, with religious tales, most of which have since been published by Tract Societies, among them the famous story of "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain." The "Cheap Repository" was continued for three years, and circulated in every village and hamlet of England and America. It almost equalled the popularity of the "Pilgrim's Progress." Two millions of these tracts were sold in the first year.

In 1799 Hannah More's great work entitled "Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education" appeared, which passed through twenty editions in a few years. It was her third ethical publication in prose, and the most powerful of all her writings. Testimonies as to its value poured in upon her from every quarter. Nothing was more talked about at that time except, perhaps, Robert Hall's "Sermons." It was regarded as one of the most perfect works of its kind that any country or age had produced. It made as deep an impression on the English mind as the "Émile" of Rousseau did on the French half a century earlier, but was vastly higher in its moral tone. I know of no

treatise on education so full and so sensible as this. It ought to be reprinted, for the benefit of this generation, for its author has forestalled all subsequent writers on this all-important subject. There is scarcely anything said by Rev. Morgan Dix, in his excellent Lenten Lectures, which was not said by Hannah More in the last century. Herbert Spencer may be more original, possibly more profound, but he is not so practical or clear or instructive as the great woman who preceded him more than half a century.

The fundamental principle which underlies all Hannah More's theories of education is the necessity of Christian instruction, which Herbert Spencer says very little about, and apparently ignores. She would not divorce education from religion. Women, especially, owe their elevation entirely to Christianity. Hence its influence should be paramount, to exalt the soul as well as enlarge the mind. All sound education should prepare one for the duties of life, rather than for the enjoyment of its pleasures. What good can I do? should be the first inquiry. It is Christianity alone that teaches the ultimate laws of morals. Hannah More would subject every impulse and every pursuit and every study to these ultimate laws as a foundation for true and desirable knowledge. She would repress everything which looks like vanity. She would educate girls for their homes, and not for a crowd; for

usefulness, and not for admiration; for that period of life when external beauty is faded or lost. She thinks more highly of solid attainments than of accomplishments, and would incite to useful rather than unnecessary works. She would have a girl learn the languages, though she deems them of little value unless one can think in them. She would cultivate that "sensibility which has its seat in the heart, rather than the nerves." Anything which detracts from modesty and delicacy, and makes a girl bold, forward, and pushing, she severely rebukes. She would check all extravagance in dancing, and would not waste much time on music unless one has a talent for it. She thinks that the excessive cultivation of the arts has contributed to the decline of States. She is severe on that style of dress which permits an indelicate exposure of the person, and on all forms of senseless extravagance. She despises children's balls, and ridicules children's rights and "Liliputian coquetry" with ribbons and feathers. She would educate women to fulfil the duties of daughters, wives, and mothers rather than to make them dancers, singers, players, painters, and actresses. She maintains that when a man of sense comes to marry, he wants a companion rather than a creature who can only dress and dance and play upon an instrument. Yet she does not discourage ornamental talent; she admits it is a good thing, but not the best thing that a

woman has. She would not cut up time into an endless multiplicity of employments. She urges mothers to impress on their daughters' minds a discriminating estimate of personal beauty, so that they may not have their heads turned by the adulation that men are so prone to lavish on those who are beautiful. While she deprecates harshness, she insists on a rigorous discipline. She would stimulate industry and the cultivation of moderate abilities, as more likely to win in the long race of life, — even as a barren soil and ungenial climate have generally produced the most thrifty people. She would banish frivolous books which give only superficial knowledge, and even those abridgments and compendiums which form too considerable a part of ordinary libraries, and recommends instead those works which exercise the reasoning faculties and stir up the powers of the mind. She expresses great contempt for English sentimentality, French philosophy, Italian poetry, and German mysticism, and is scarcely less severe on the novels of her day, which stimulate the imagination without adding to knowledge. She recommends history as the most improving of all studies, both as a revelation of the ways of Providence and as tending to the enlargement of the mind. She insists on accuracy in language and on avoiding exaggerations. She inculcates co-operation with man, and not rivalry or struggle for power. What she says

about women's rights — which, it seems, was a question that agitated even her age — is worth quoting, since it is a woman, and not a man, who speaks: —

"Is it not more wise to move contentedly in the plain path which Providence has obviously marked out for the sex, and in which custom has for the most part rationally confirmed them, rather than to stray awkwardly, unbecomingly, unsuccessfully, in a forbidden road; to be the lawful possessors of a lesser domestic territory, rather than the turbulent usurpers of a wider foreign empire; to be good originals, rather than bad imitators; to be the best thing of one's kind, rather than an inferior thing even if it were of a higher kind; to be excellent women, rather than indifferent men? Let not woman view with envy the keen satirist hunting vice through all the doublings and windings of the heart; the sagacious politician leading senates and directing the fate of empires; the acute lawyer detecting the obliquities of fraud, or the skilful dramatist exposing the pretensions of folly; but let her remember that those who thus excel, to all that Nature bestows and books can teach must add besides that consummate knowledge of the world to which a delicate woman has no fair avenues, and which, even if she could attain, she would never be supposed to have come honestly by. . . . Women possess in a high degree that delicacy and quickness of perception, and that nice discernment between the beautiful and defective which comes under the denomination of taste. Both in composition and action they excel in details; but they do not so much

generalize their ideas as men, nor do their minds seize a great subject with so large a grasp. They are acute observers, and accurate judges of life and manners, so far as their own sphere of observation extends; but they describe a smaller circle. And they have a certain tact which enables them to feel what is just more instantaneously than they can define it. They have an intuitive penetration into character bestowed upon them by Providence, like the sensitive and tender organs of some timid animals, as a kind of natural guard to warn of the approach of danger, — beings who are often called to act defensively.

"But whatever characteristic distinctions may exist between man and woman, there is one great and leading circumstance which raises woman and establishes her equality with man. Christianity has exalted woman to true and undisputed dignity. 'In Christ Jesus there is neither rich nor poor, bond nor free, male nor female.' So that if we deny to women the talents which lead them to excel as lawyers, they are preserved from the peril of having their principles warped by that too indiscriminate defence of right and wrong to which the professors of the law are exposed. If we question their title to eminence as mathematicians, they are exempted from the danger of looking for demonstration on subjects which, by their very nature, are incapable of affording it. If they are less conversant with the powers of Nature, the structure of the human frame, and the knowledge of the heavenly bodies than philosophers, physicians, and astronomers, they are delivered from the error into

which many of each of these have sometimes fallen, from the fatal habit of resting on second causes, instead of referring all to the first. And let women take comfort that in their very exemption from privileges which they are sometimes disposed to envy, consist their security and their happiness."

Thus spoke Hannah More at the age of fifty-four, with a wider experience of society and a profounder knowledge of her sex than any Englishwoman of the eighteenth century, and as distinguished for her intellectual gifts and cultivation as she was for her social graces and charms, — the pet and admiration of all who were great and good in her day, both among men and women. Bear these facts in mind, ye obscure, inexperienced, discontented, envious, ambitious seekers after notoriety or novelty! — ye rebellious and defiant opponents of the ordinances of God and the laws of Nature, if such women there are! — remember that the sentiments I have just quoted came from the pen of a woman, and not of a man; of a woman who was the best friend of her sex, and the most enlightened advocate of their education that lived in the last century; and a woman who, if she were living now, would undoubtedly be classed with those whom we call strong-minded, and perhaps masculine and ambitious. She recognizes the eternal distinction between the sphere of a man and the sphere of a woman, with-

out admitting any inferiority of woman to man, except in physical strength and a sort of masculine power of generalization and grasp. And *she* would educate woman for her own sphere, not for the sphere of man, whatever Christianity, or experience, or reason may define that sphere to be. She would make woman useful, interesting, lofty; she would give dignity to her soul; she would make her the friend and helpmate of man, not his rival; she would make her a Christian woman, since, with Christian virtues and graces and principles, she will not be led astray.

But I would not dwell on ground which may be controverted, and which to some may appear discourteous or discouraging to those noble women who are doomed by dire and hard misfortunes, by terrible necessities, to labor in some fields which have been assigned to man, and in which departments they have earned the admiration and respect of men themselves. This subject is only one in a hundred which Hannah More discussed with clearness, power, and wisdom. She is equally valuable and impressive in what she says of conversation, — a realm in which she had no superior. Hear what she says about this gift or art:

"Do we wish to see women take a lead in metaphysical disquisitions, — to plunge in the depths of theological polemics? Do we wish to enthrone them in the chairs of our

universities, to deliver oracles, harangues, and dissertations? Do we desire to behold them, inflated with their original powers, laboring to strike out sparks of wit, with a restless anxiety to shine, and with a labored affectation to please, which never pleases? All this be far from them! But we *do* wish to see the conversation of well-bred women rescued from vapid commonplaces, from uninteresting tattle, from trite communications, from frivolous earnestness, from false sensibility, from a warm interest about things of no moment, and an indifference to topics the most important; from a cold vanity, from the overflows of self-love, exhibiting itself under the smiling mask of an engaging flattery; and from all the factitious manners of artificial intercourse. We *do* wish to see the time passed in polished and intelligent society considered as the pleasant portion of our existence, and not consigned to premeditated trifling and systematic unprofitableness. Women too little live or converse up to their understandings; and however we deprecate affectation and pedantry, let it be remembered that both in reading and conversing, the understanding gains more by stretching than stooping. The mind by applying itself to objects below its level, contracts and shrinks itself to the size of the object about which it is conversant. In the faculty of speaking well, ladies have such a happy promptitude of turning their slender advantages to account, that though never taught a rule of syntax, they hardly ever violate one, and often possess an elegant arrangement of style without having studied any of the laws of composition. And yet they are too ready to

produce not only pedantic expressions, but crude notions and hackneyed remarks with all the vanity of conscious discovery, and all from reading mere abridgments and scanty sketches rather than exhausting subjects."

Equally forcible are her remarks on society: —

"Perhaps," said she, "the interests of friendship, elegant conversation, and true social pleasure, never received such a blow as when fashion issued the decree that *everybody must be acquainted with everybody.* The decline of instructive conversation has been effected in a great measure by the barbarous habit of assembly *en masse,* where one hears the same succession of unmeaning platitudes, mutual insincerities, and aimless inquiries. It would be trite, however, to dwell on the vapid talk which must almost of necessity mark those who assemble in crowds, and which we are taught to call society, which really cannot exist without the free interchange of thought and sentiment. Hence society only truly shines in small and select circles of people of high intelligence, who are drawn together by friendship as well as admiration."

About two years after this work on education appeared, — education in the broadest sense, pertaining to woman at home and in society as well as at school, — Hannah More moved from her little thatched cottage, and built Barley Wood, — a large villa, where she could entertain the increasing circle of her friends, who were at this period only the learned, the pious, and the dis-

tinguished, especially bishops like Porteus and Horne, and philanthropists like Wilberforce. The beauty of this new residence amid woods and lawns attracted her sisters from Bath, who continued to live with her the rest of their lives, and to co-operate with her in deeds of benevolence. In this charming retreat she wrote perhaps the most famous of her books, "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife," — not much read, I fancy, in these times, but admired in its day before the great revolution in novel-writing was made by Sir Walter Scott Yet this work is no more a novel than the "Dialogues of Plato." Like "Rasselas," it is a treatise, — a narrative essay on the choice of a wife, the expansion and continuation of her strictures on education and fashionable life. This work appeared in 1808, when the writer was sixty-three years of age. As on former occasions, she now not only assumed an anonymous name, but endeavored to hide herself under deeper incognita, — all, however, to no purpose, as everybody soon knew, from the style, who the author was. The first edition of this popular work — popular, I mean, in its day, for no work is popular long, though it may remain forever a classic on the shelves of libraries — was sold in two weeks. Twelve thousand were published the first year, the profits of which were £2,000. In this country the sale was larger, thirty thousand copies being sold during the life of the author. It was also translated into most

of the modern languages of Europe. In 1811 appeare her work on "Christian Morals," which had a sale o ten thousand; and in 1815 her essay on the "Characte and Practical Writings of Saint Paul," of which seve thousand copies were sold. These works were followe by her "Moral Sketches of Prevailing Opinions an Manners," of which ten thousand were sold, and whic realized a royalty of £3,000.

At the age of eighty, Hannah More wrote her "Spiri of Prayer," of which nearly twenty thousand copie were printed; and with this work her literary caree virtually closed. Her later works were written amic the pains of disease and many distractions, especially visits from distinguished and curious people, which took up her time and sadly interrupted her labors. At the age of eighty, though still receiving many visitors, she found herself nearly alone in the world. All her most intimate friends had died, — Mrs. Garrick at the age of ninety-eight; Sir William Pepys (the Lælius of the "Bas Bleu"); Dr. Porteus, Bishop of London; Dr. Fisher, Bishop of Salisbury; Bishop Horne, Bishop Barrington; Dr. Andrew, Dean of Canterbury; and Lady Cremon, besides her three sisters. The friends of her earlier days had long since passed away, — Garrick, Johnson, Reynolds, Horace Walpole. Of those who started in the race with her few were left. Still, visitors continued to throng her house to the last, impelled

by admiration or curiosity; and she was obliged at length to limit her levee to the hours between one and three.

Hannah More lived at Barley Wood nearly thirty years in dignified leisure, with an ample revenue and in considerable style, keeping her carriage and horses, with a large number of servants, dispensing a generous hospitality, and giving away in charities a considerable part of her income. She realized from her pen £30,000, and her sisters also had accumulated a fortune by their school in Bristol. Her property must have been considerable, since on her death she bequeathed in charities nearly £10,000, beside endowing a church. She spent about £900 a year in charities.

The last few years of her residence at Barley Wood were disturbed by the ingratitude and dishonesty of her servants. They deceived and robbed her, especially those to whom she had been most kind and generous. She was, at her advanced age, entirely dependent on these servants, so that she could not reform her establishment. There was the most shameless peculation in the kitchen, and money given in charity was appropriated by the servants, who all combined to cheat her. Out of her sight, they were disorderly: they gave nocturnal suppers to their friends, and drank up her wines. So she resolved to discharge the whole of them, and sell her beautiful place; and

when she finally left her home, these servants openly insulted her. She removed to a house in Clifton, where she had equal comfort and fewer cares. In this house she spent the remaining four years of her useful life, dispensing charities, and entertaining the numerous friends who visited her, and the crowd who came to do her honor. She died in September, 1833, at the age of eighty-eight, retaining her intellectual faculties, like Madame de Maintenon, nearly to the last. She was buried with great honors. A beautiful monument was erected to her memory in the parish church where her mortal remains were buried, — the subscription to this monument being five times greater than the sum needed.

Hannah More was strongly attached to the Church of England, and upheld the authority of the established religious institutions of the country. She excited some hostility from the liberality of her views, for she would occasionally frequent the chapels of the Dissenters and partake of their communion. She was supposed by many to lean towards Methodism, — as everybody was accused of doing in the last century, in England, who led a strictly religious life. She was evangelical in her views, but was not Calvinistic; nor was she a believer in instantaneous conversions, any more than she was in baptismal regeneration. She contributed liberally to religious and philanthropic societies. The best

book, she thought, that was ever published was Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying;" but her opinion was that John Howe was a greater man. She was a great admirer of Shakspeare, whom she placed on the highest pedestal of human genius. She also admired Sir Walter Scott's poetry, especially "Marmion." She admitted the genius of Byron, but had such detestation of his character that she would not read his poetry.

The best and greatest part of the life of Hannah More was devoted to the education and elevation of her sex. Her most valuable writings were educational and moral. Her popularity did not wane with advancing years. No literary woman ever had warmer friends; and these she retained. She never lost a friend except by death. She had to lament over no broken friendships, since her friendships were based on respect and affection. Her nature must have been very genial. For so strict a woman in her religious duties, she was very tolerant of human infirmities. She was faithful in reproof, but having once given her friendship she held on to it with great tenacity; she clung to the worldly Horace Walpole as she did to Dr. Johnson. The most intimate woman friend of her long life was a Catholic. Hannah was never married, which was not her fault, for she was jilted by the man she loved, — for whom, however, she is said to have retained a friendly feeling to the last.

Though unmarried, she was addressed as Mrs., not Miss, More; and she seems to have insisted on this, which I think was a weakness, since the dignity of her character, her fame and high social position, needed no conventional crutch to make her appear more matronly. As a mere fashionable woman of society, her name would never have descended to our times; as a moralist she is immortal, so far as any writer can be. As an author, I do not regard her as a great original genius; but her successful and honorable career shows how much may be done by industry and perseverance. Her memory is kept especially fresh from the interest she took in the education of her sex, and from her wise and sage counsels, based on religion and a wide experience. No woman ever had better opportunities for the study of her sex, or more nobly improved them. She was the most enlightened advocate of a high education for women that her age and even her century produced.

Now, what is meant by a high education for women? for in our times the opinions of people in regard to this matter are far from being harmonious. Indeed, on no subject is there more disagreement; there is no subject which provokes more bitter and hostile comments; there is no subject on which both men and women wrangle with more acerbity, even when they are virtually agreed, — for the instincts of good women are

really in accord with the profoundest experience and reason of men.

In the few remarks to which I am now limited I shall not discuss the irritating and disputed question of co-education of the sexes, which can only be settled by experience. On this subject we have not yet sufficient facts for a broad induction. On the one hand, it would seem that so long as young men and women mingle freely together in amusements, at parties and balls, at the theatre and opera, in the lecture-room, in churches, and most public meetings, it is not probable that any practical evils can result from educational competition of the two sexes in the same class-rooms, especially when we consider that many eminent educators have given their testimony in its favor, so far as it has fallen under their observation and experience. But, on the other hand, the co-education of the sexes may imply that both girls and boys, by similarity of studies, are to be educated for the same sphere. Boys study the higher mathematics not merely for mental discipline, but in order to be engineers, astronomers, surveyors, and the like; so, too, they study chemistry, in its higher branches, to be chemists and physicians and miners. If girls wish to do this rough work, let them know that they seek to do men's work. If they are to do women's work, it would seem that they should give more attention to music, the modern languages,

and ornamental branches than boys do, since few men pursue these things as a business.

The question is, Is it wise for boys and girls to pursue the same studies in the more difficult branches of knowledge? I would withhold no study from a woman on the ground of assumed intellectual inferiority. I believe that a woman can grasp any subject as well as a man can, so far and so long as her physical strength will permit her to make exhaustive researches. There are some studies which task the physical strength of men to its utmost tension. If any woman has equal physical power with men to master certain subjects, let her pursue them; for success, even with men, depends upon physical endurance as well as brain-power. And thus the question is one of physical strength and endurance; and women must settle for themselves whether they can run races with men in studies in which only the physically strong can hope to succeed.

Then, again, I would educate women with reference to the sphere in which they must forever move, — a sphere settled by the eternal laws of Nature and duty, against which it is folly to rebel. Does any one doubt or deny that the sphere of women *is* different from the sphere of men? Can it be questioned that a class of studies pursued by women who are confined for a considerable period of life to domestic duties, — like the

care of children, and the details of household economy, and attendance on the sick, and ornamental art labors, — should not be different from those pursued by men who undertake the learned professions, and the government of the people, and the accumulation of wealth in the hard drudgeries of banks and counting-houses and stores and commercial travelling? There is no way to get round this question except by maintaining that men should not be exempted from the cares and duties which for all recorded ages have been assigned to women; and that women should enter upon the equally settled sphere of man, and become lawyers, politicians, clergymen, members of Congress and of State legislatures, sailors, merchants, commercial travellers, bankers, railway conductors, and steamship captains. I once knew the discontented wife of an eminent painter, with a brilliant intellect, who insisted that her husband should leave his studio and spend five hours a day in the drudgeries of the nursery and kitchen to relieve her, and that she should spend the five hours in her studio as an amateur, — that they thus might be on an equality! The husband died in a mad-house, after dying for a year with a broken heart and a crushed ambition. He was obliged to submit to his wife's demand, or fight from morning to night and from night to morning; and as he was a man of peace, he quietly yielded up his prerogative. Do you admire

the one who prevailed over him? She belonged to that class who are called strong-minded; but she was perverted, as some noble minds are, by atheistic and spiritualistic views, and thought to raise women by lifting them out of the sphere which God has appointed.

If, then, there be distinct spheres, divinely appointed, for women and for men, and an education should be given to fit them for rising in their respective spheres, the question arises, What studies shall woman pursue in order to develop her mind and resources, and fit her for happiness and usefulness? This question is only to be answered by those who have devoted their lives to the education of young ladies. I would go into no details; I would only lay down the general proposition that a woman should be educated to be interesting both to her own sex and to men; to be useful in her home; to exercise the best influence on her female and male companions; to have her affections as well as intellect developed; to have her soul elevated so as to be kindled by lofty sentiments, and to feel that there is something higher than the adornment of the person, or the attracting of attention in those noisy crowds which are called society. She should be taught to become the friend and helpmate of man,—never his rival. She is to be invested with those graces which call out the worship of man, which cause her to shine with the radiance of the soul, and with those virtues which men

rarely reach,—a superior loftiness of character, a greater purity of mind, a heavenlike patience and magnanimity. She is not an angel, but a woman; yet she should shine with angelic qualities and aspire to angelic virtues, and prove herself, morally and spiritually, to be so superior to man, that he will render to her an instinctive deference; not a mock and ironical deference, because she is supposed to be inferior and weak, but a real deference, a genuine respect on which all permanent friendship rests, — and even love itself, which every woman, as well as every man, craves from the bottom of the soul, and without which life has no object, no charm, and no interest.

Is woman necessarily made a drudge by assuming those domestic duties which add so much to the unity and happiness of a family, and which a man cannot so well discharge as he can the more arduous labors of supporting a family? Are her labors in directing servants or educating her children more irksome than the labors of a man, in heat and cold, often among selfish and disagreeable companions? Is woman, in restricting herself to her sphere, thereby debarred from the pleasures of literature and art? As a rule, is she not already better educated than her husband? However domestic she may be, cannot she still paint and sing, and read and talk on the grandest subjects? Is she not really more privileged than her husband or brother, with

more time and less harassing cares and anxieties? Would she really exchange her graceful labors for the rough and turbulent work of men?

But here I am stopped with the inquiry, What will you do with those women who are unfortunate, who have no bright homes to adorn, no means of support, no children to instruct, no husbands to rule: women cast out of the sphere where they would like to live, and driven to hard and uncongenial labors, forced to run races with men, or starve? To such my remarks do not apply; they are exceptions, and not the rule. To them I would say, Do cheerfully what Providence seems to point out for *you;* do the best you can, even in the sphere into which you are forced. If you are at any time thrown upon your own resources, and compelled to adopt callings which task your physical strength, accept such lot with resignation, but without any surrender of your essentially feminine and womanly qualities; do not try to be like men, for men are lower than you in their ordinary tastes and occupations. And I would urge all women, rich and poor, to pursue some one art, — like music, or painting, or decoration, — not only for amusement, but with the purpose to carry it so far that in case of misfortune they can fall back upon it and get a living; for proficiency in these arts belongs as much to the sphere of women as of men, since it refines and cultivates them.

But again some may say, — not those who are unfortunate, and seemingly driven from the glories and beatitudes of woman's sphere, but those who are peculiarly intellectual and aspiring, and in some respects very interesting, — Why should not we embark in some of those callings which heretofore have been assigned to or usurped by man, and become physicians, and professors in colleges, and lawyers, and merchants, not because we are driven to get a living, but because we prefer them; and hence, in order to fit ourselves for these departments, why should we not pursue the highest studies which task the intellect of man? To such I would reply, Do so, if you please; there is no valid reason why you should not try. Nor will you fail unless your frailer bodies fail, as fail they will, in a long race, — for do what you will to strengthen and develop your physical forces for a million of years, you will still be women, and physically weaker than men; that is, your nervous system cannot stand the strain of that long-continued and intense application which all professional men are compelled to exert in order to gain success. But if you have in any individual case the physical strength of a man, do what you please, so long as you preserve the delicacy and purity of womanhood, — practise medicine or law, keep school, translate books, keep boarders, go behind a counter; yea, keep a shop, set types, keep accounts, give music and French

lessons, sing in concerts and churches, — do whatever you can do as well as men. You have that right; nobody will molest you or slander you. If you must, or if you choose to, labor so, God help you!

So, then, the whole question of woman's education is decided by physical limitations, concerning which there is no dispute, and against which it is vain to rebel; and we return to the more agreeable task of pointing out the supreme necessity of developing in woman those qualities which will make her a guide and a radiance and a benediction in that sphere to which Nature and Providence and immemorial custom would appear to have assigned her. Let her become great as a woman, not as a man. Let her maintain her rights; but in doing so, let her not forget her duties. The Bible says nothing at all about the former, and very much about the latter. Let her remember that she is the complement of a man, and hence that what is most feminine about her is most interesting to man and useful to the world. God made man and woman of one flesh, yet unlike. And who can point out any fundamental inferiority or superiority between them? The only superiority lies in the superior way in which each discharges peculiar trusts and responsibilities. It is in this light alone that we see some husbands superior to their wives, and some wives superior to

their husbands. No sensible person would say that a girl is superior to her brother because she has a greater aptness for mathematics than he, but because she excels in the queen-like attributes and virtues and duties peculiar to her own sex and belonging to her own sphere, — that sphere so beautiful, that when she abdicates it, it is like being expelled from Paradise; for, once lost, it can never be regained. That education is best even for a great woman, — great in intellect as in soul, — which best develops the lofty ideal of womanhood; which best makes her a real woman, and not a poor imitation of man, and gives to her the dignity and grace of a queen over her household, and brings out that moral beauty by which she reigns over her husband's heart, and inspires the reverence which children ought to feel. Do we derogate from the greatness of women when we seek to kindle the brightness of that moral beauty which outshines all the triumphs of mere intellectual forces? Should women murmur because they cannot be superior in everything, when it is conceded that they are superior in the best thing? Nor let her clutch what she can neither retain nor enjoy. In the primeval Paradise there was one tree the fruit of which our mother Eve was forbidden to touch or to eat. There is a tree which grows in our times, whose fruit, when eaten by some, produces unrest, discontent, rebellion against

God, unsatisfied desires, a revelation of unrealized miseries, the mere contemplation of which is enough to drive to madness and moral death. Yet of all the other trees of life's garden may woman eat, — those trees that grow in the boundless field which modern knowledge and enterprise have revealed to woman, and which, if she confine herself thereto, will make her a blessing and a glory forever to fallen and afflicted humanity.

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GEORGE ELIOT.

WOMAN AS NOVELIST.

A. D. 1821–1880.

GEORGE ELIOT.

WOMAN AS NOVELIST.

SINCE the dawn of modern civilization, every age has been marked by some new development of genius or energy. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we notice Gothic architecture, the rise of universities, the scholastic philosophy, and a general interest in metaphysical inquiries. The fourteenth century witnessed chivalric heroism, courts of love, tournaments, and amorous poetry. In the fifteenth century we see the revival of classical literature and Grecian art. The sixteenth century was a period of reform, theological discussions, and warfare with Romanism. In the seventeenth century came contests for civil and religious liberty, and discussions on the theological questions which had agitated the Fathers of the Church. The eighteenth century was marked by the speculations of philosophers and political economists, ending in revolution. The nineteenth century has been distinguished for scien-

tific discoveries and inventions directed to practical and utilitarian ends, and a wonderful development in the literature of fiction. It is the age of novelists, as the fifteenth century was the age of painters. Everybody now reads novels, — bishops, statesmen, judges, scholars, as well as young men and women. The shelves of libraries groan with the weight of novels of every description, — novels sensational, novels sentimental, novels historical, novels philosophical, novels social, and novels which discuss every subject under the sun. Novelists aim to be teachers in ethics, philosophy, politics, religion, and art; and they are rapidly supplanting lecturers and clergymen as the guides of men, accepting no rivals but editors and reviewers.

This extraordinary literary movement was started by Sir Walter Scott, who made a revolution in novel-writing, introducing a new style, freeing romances from bad taste, vulgarity, insipidity, and false sentiment. He painted life and Nature without exaggerations, avoided interminable scenes of love-making, and gave a picture of society in present and past times so fresh, so vivid, so natural, so charming, and so true, and all with such inimitable humor, that he still reigns without a peer in his peculiar domain. He is as rich in humor as Fielding, without his coarseness; as inventive as Swift, without his bitterness; as moral as

Richardson, without his tediousness. He did not aim to teach ethics or political economy directly, although he did not disguise his opinions. His chief end was to please and instruct at the same time, stimulating the mind through the imagination rather than the reason; so healthful that fastidious parents made an exception of his novels among all others that had ever been written, and encouraged the young to read them. Sir Walter Scott took off the ban which religious people had imposed on novel-reading.

Then came Dickens, amazingly popular, with his grotesque descriptions of life, his exaggerations, his impossible characters and improbable incidents; yet so genial in sympathies, so rich in humor, so indignant at wrongs, so broad in his humanity, that everybody loved to read him, although his learning was small and his culture superficial.

Greatly superior to him as an artist and a thinker was Thackeray, whose fame has been steadily increasing, — the greatest master of satire in English literature, and one of the truest painters of social life that any age has produced; not so much admired by women as by men; accurate in his delineation of character, though sometimes bitter and fierce; felicitous in plot, teaching lessons in morality, unveiling shams and hypocrisy, contemptuous of all fools and quacks, yet sad in his reflections on human life.

In the brilliant constellation of which Dickens and Thackeray were the greater lights was Bulwer Lytton, — versatile; subjective in genius; sentimental, and yet not sensational; reflective, yet not always sound in morals; learned in general literature, but a charlatan in scientific knowledge; worldly in his spirit, but not a pagan; an inquisitive student, seeking to penetrate the mysteries of Nature as well as to paint characters and events in other times; and leaving a higher moral impression when he was old than when he was young.

Among the lesser lights, yet real stars, that have blazed in this generation are Reade, Kingsley, Black, James, Trollope, Cooper, Howells, Wallace, and a multitude of others, in France and Germany as well as England and America, to say nothing of the thousands who have aspired and failed as artists, yet who have succeeded in securing readers and in making money.

And what shall I say of the host of female novelists which this age has produced, — women who have inundated the land with productions both good and bad; mostly feeble, penetrating the cottages of the poor rather than the palaces of the rich, and making the fortunes of magazines and news-venders, from Maine to California? But there are three women novelists, writing in English, standing out in this group of mediocrity, who have earned a just and wide fame, —

Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Marian Evans, who goes by the name of George Eliot.

It is the last of these remarkable women whom it is my object to discuss, and who burst upon the literary world as a star whose light has been constantly increasing since she first appeared. She takes rank with Dickens, Thackeray, and Bulwer, and some place her higher even than Sir Walter Scott. Her fame is prodigious, and it is a glory to her sex; indeed, she is an intellectual phenomenon. No woman ever received such universal fame as a genius except, perhaps, Madame de Staël; or as an artist, if we except Madame Dudevant, who also bore a *nom de plume*, — Georges Sand. She did not become immediately popular, but the critics from the first perceived her remarkable gifts and predicted her ultimate success. For vivid description of natural scenery and rural English life, minute analysis of character, and psychological insight she has never been surpassed by men; while for learning and profundity she has never been equalled by women, — a deep, serious, sad writer, without vanity or egotism or pretension; a great but not always sound teacher, who, by common consent and prediction, will live and rank among the classical authors in English literature.

Marian Evans was born in Warwickshire, about twenty miles from Stratford-on-Avon, — the county of

Shakspeare, one of the most fertile and beautiful in England, whose parks and lawns and hedges and picturesque cottages, with their gardens and flowers and thatched roofs, present to the eye a perpetual charm. Her father, of Welsh descent, was originally a carpenter, but became, by his sturdy honesty, ability, and abiding sense of duty, land agent to Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Hall. Mr. Evans's sterling character probably furnished the model for Adam Bede and Caleb Garth.

Sprung from humble ranks, but from conscientious and religious parents, who appreciated the advantage of education, Miss Evans was allowed to make the best of her circumstances. We have few details of her early life on which we can accurately rely. She was not an egotist, and did not leave an autobiography like Trollope, or reminiscences like Carlyle; but she has probably portrayed herself, in her early aspirations, as Madame de Stael did, in the characters she has created. The less we know about the personalities of very distinguished geniuses, the better it is for their fame. Shakspeare might not seem so great to us if we knew his peculiarities and infirmities as we know those of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Carlyle; only such a downright honest and good man as Dr. Johnson can stand the severe scrutiny of after times and "destructive criticism."

It would appear that Miss Evans was sent to a school in Nuneaton before she was ten, and afterwards to a school in Coventry, kept by two excellent Methodist ladies, — the Misses Franklin, — whose lives and teachings enabled her to delineate Dinah Morris. As a school-girl we are told that she had the manners and appearance of a woman. Her hair was pale brown, worn in ringlets; her figure was slight, her head massive, her mouth large, her jaw square, her complexion pale, her eyes gray-blue, and her voice rich and musical. She lost her mother at sixteen, when she most needed maternal counsels, and afterwards lived alone with her father until 1841, when they removed to Foleshill, near Coventry. She was educated in the doctrines of the Low or Evangelical Church, which are those of Calvin, — although her Calvinism was early modified by the Arminian views of Wesley. At twelve she taught a class in a Sunday-school; at twenty she wrote poetry, as most bright girls do. The head-master of the grammar school in Coventry taught her Greek and Latin, while Signor Brizzi gave her lessons in Italian, French, and German; she also played on the piano with great skill. Her learning and accomplishments were so unusual, and gave such indication of talent, that she was received as a friend in the house of Mr. Charles Bray, of Coventry, a wealthy ribbon-merchant, where she saw many eminent literary men of the progressive

school, among whom were James Anthony Froude and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

At what period the change in her religious views took place I have been unable to ascertain, — probably between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five, by which time she had become a remarkably well-educated woman, of great conversational powers, interesting because of her intelligence, brightness, and sensibility, but not for her personal beauty. In fact, she was not merely homely, she was even ugly; though many admirers saw great beauty in her eyes and expression when her countenance was lighted up. She was unobtrusive and modest, and retired within herself.

At this period she translated from the German the "Life of Jesus," by Strauss, Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity," and one of Spinoza's works. Why should a young woman have selected such books to translate? How far the writings of rationalistic and atheistic philosophers affected her own views we cannot tell; but at this time her progressive and advanced opinions irritated and grieved her father, so that, as we are told, he treated her with intolerant harshness. With all her paganism, however, she retained the sense of duty, and was devoted in her attentions to her father until he died, in 1849. She then travelled on the Continent with the Brays, seeing most of the countries of Europe, and studying their languages, manners, and



From a photograph

GEORGE ELIOT

institutions. She resided longest in a boarding-house near Geneva, amid scenes renowned by the labors of Gibbon, Voltaire, and Madame de Stael, in sight of the Alps, absorbed in the theories of St. Simon and Proudhon, — a believer in the necessary progress of the race as the result of evolution rather than of revelation or revolution.

Miss Evans returned to England about the year 1857, — the year of the Great Exhibition, — and soon after became sub-editor of the "Westminster Review," at one time edited by John Stuart Mill, but then in charge of John Chapman, the proprietor, at whose house, in the Strand, she boarded. There she met a large circle of literary and scientific men of the ultra-liberal, radical school, those who looked upon themselves as the more advanced thinkers of the age, whose aim was to destroy belief in supernaturalism and inspiration; among whom were John Stuart Mill, Francis Newman, Herbert Spencer, James Anthony Froude, G. H. Lewes, John A. Roebuck, and Harriet Martineau, — dreary theorists, mistrusted and disliked equally by the old Whigs and Tories, high-churchmen, and evangelical Dissenters; clever thinkers and learned doubters, but arrogant, discontented, and defiant.

It was then that the friendly attachment between Miss Evans and Mr. Lewes began, which ripened into love and ended in a scandal. Mr. Lewes was as

homely as Wilkes, and was three years older than Miss Evans, — a very bright, witty, versatile, learned, and accomplished man; a brilliant talker, novelist, playwright, biographer, actor, essayist, and historian, whose "Life of Goethe" is still the acknowledged authority in Germany itself, as Carlyle's "Life of Frederic II." is also regarded. But his fame has since been eclipsed by that of the woman he pretended to call his wife, and with whom (his legal wife being still alive) he lived in open defiance of the seventh Commandment and the social customs of England for twenty years. This unfortunate connection, which saddened the whole subsequent life of Miss Evans, and tinged all her writings with the gall of her soul, excluded her from that high conventional society which it has been the aim of most ambitious women to enter. But this exclusion was not, perhaps, so great an annoyance to Miss Evans as it would have been to Hannah More, since she was not fitted to shine in general society, especially if frivolous, and preferred to talk with authors, artists, actors, and musical geniuses, rather than with prejudiced, pleasure-seeking, idle patricians, who had such attractions for Addison, Pope, Mackintosh, and other lights of literature, who unconsciously encouraged that idolatry of rank and wealth which is one of the most uninteresting traits of the English nation. Nor would those fashionable people, whom

the world calls "great," have seen much to attract them in a homely and unconventional woman whose views were discrepant with the established social and religious institutions of the land. A class that would not tolerate such a genius as Carlyle, would not have admired Marian Evans, even if the stern etiquette of English life had not excluded her from envied and coveted *réunions;* and she herself, doubtless, preferred to them the brilliant society which assembled in Mr. Chapman's parlors to discuss those philosophical and political theories of which Comte was regarded as the high-priest, and his positivism the essence of all progressive wisdom.

How far the gloomy materialism and superficial rationalism of Lewes may have affected the opinions of Miss Evans we cannot tell. He was her teacher and constant companion, and she passed as his wife; so it is probable that he strengthened in her mind that dreary pessimism which appeared in her later writings. Certain it is that she paid the penalty of violating a fundamental moral law, in the neglect of those women whose society she could have adorned, and possibly in the silent reproaches of conscience, which she portrayed so vividly in the characters of those heroines who struggled ineffectually in the conflict between duty and passion. True, she accepted the penalty without complaint, and labored to the end of her days. with

masculine strength, to enforce a life of duty and self-renunciation on her readers, — to live at least for the good of humanity. Nor did she court notoriety, like Georges Sand, who was as indifferent to reproach as she was to shame. Miss Evans led a quiet, studious, unobtrusive life with the man she loved, sympathetic in her intercourse with congenial friends, and devoted to domestic duties. And Mr. Lewes himself relieved her from many irksome details, that she might be free to prosecute her intense literary labors.

In this lecture on George Eliot I gladly would have omitted all allusion to a mistake which impairs our respect for this great woman. But defects cannot be unnoticed in an honest delineation of character; and no candid biographers, from those who described the lives of Abraham and David, to those who have portrayed the characters of Queen Elizabeth and Oliver Cromwell, have sought to conceal the moral defects of their subjects.

Aside from the translations already mentioned, the first literary efforts of Miss Evans were her articles in the "Westminster Review," a heavy quarterly, established to advocate philosophical radicalism. In this Review appeared from her pen the article on Carlyle's "Life of Sterling," "Madame de la Sablière," "Evangelical Teachings," "Heine," "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," "The Natural History of German

Life," "Worldliness and Unworldliness,"— all powerfully written, but with a vein of bitter sarcasm in reference to the teachers of those doctrines which she fancied she had outgrown. Her connection with the "Review" closed in 1853, when she left Mr. Chapman's home and retired to a small house in Cambridge Terrace, Hyde Park, on a modest but independent income. In 1854 she revisited the Continent with Mr. Lewes, spending her time chiefly in Germany.

It was in 1857 that the first tales of Miss Evans were published in "Blackwood's Magazine," when she was thirty-eight, in the full maturity of her mind.

"The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton" was the first of the series called "Scenes of Clerical Life" which appeared. Mr. Blackwood saw at once the great merit of the work, and although it was not calculated to arrest the attention of ordinary readers he published it, confident of its ultimate success. He did not know whether it was written by a man or by a woman; he only knew that he received it from the hand of Mr. Lewes, an author already well known as learned and brilliant. It is fortunate for a person in the conventional world of letters, as of society, to be well introduced.

This story, though gloomy in its tone, is fresh, unique, and interesting, and the style good, clear, vivid, strong. It opens with a beautiful description of an old-fashioned country church, with its high and

square pews, in which the devout worshippers could not be seen by one another, nor even by the parson. This functionary went to church in top-boots, and, after his short sermon of platitudes, dined with the squire, and spent the remaining days of the week in hunting or fishing, and his evenings in playing cards, quietly drinking his ale, and smoking his pipe. But the hero of the story — Amos Barton — is a different sort of man from his worldly and easy rector. He is a churchman, and yet intensely evangelical and devoted to his humble duties, — on a salary of £80, with a large family and a sick wife. He is narrow, but truly religious and disinterested. The scene of the story is laid in a retired country village in the Midland Counties, at a time when the Evangelical movement was in full force in England, in the early part of last century, contemporaneous with the religious revivals of New England; when the bucolic villagers had little to talk about or interest them, before railways had changed the face of the country, or the people had been aroused to political discussions and reforms. The sorrows of the worthy clergyman centered in an indiscreet and in part unwilling hospitality which he gave to an artful, needy, pretentious, selfish woman, but beautiful and full of soft flatteries; which hospitality provoked scandal, and caused the poor man to be driven away to another parish. The tragic element of the story, however,

centres in Mrs. Barton, who is an angel, radiant with moral beauty, affectionate, devoted, and uncomplaining, who dies at last from overwork and privations, and the cares of a large family of children.

There is no plot in this story, but its charm and power consist in a vivid description of common life, minute but not exaggerated, which enlists our sympathy with suffering and misfortune, deeply excites our interest in commonplace people living out their weary and monotonous existence. This was a new departure in fiction, — a novel without love-scenes or happy marriages or thrilling adventures or impossible catastrophes. But there is great pathos in this homely tale of sorrow; with no attempts at philosophizing, no digressions, no wearisome chapters that one wishes to skip, but all spontaneous, natural, free, showing reserved power, — the precious buds of promise destined to bloom in subsequent works, till the world should be filled with the aroma of its author's genius. And there is also great humor in this clerical tale, of which the following is a specimen: —

"'Eh, dear,' said Mrs. Patten, falling back in her chair and lifting up her withered hands, 'what would Mr. Gilfil say if he was worthy to know the changes as have come about in the church in these ten years? I don't understand these new sort of doctrines. When Mr. Barton comes to see me he talks about my sins and my need of marcy. Now, Mr. Hackett,

I 've never been a sinner. From the first beginning, when I went into service, I 've al'ys did my duty to my employers. I was as good a wife as any in the country, never aggravating my husband. The cheese-factor used to say that my cheeses was al'ys to be depended upon.' "

To describe clerical life was doubtless the aim which Miss Evans had in view in this and the two other tales which soon followed. In these, as indeed in all her novels, the clergy largely figure. She seems to be profoundly acquainted with the theological views of the different sects, as well as with the social habits of the different ministers. So far as we can detect her preference, it is for the Broad Church, or the "high-and-dry" clergy of the Church of England, especially those who were half squires and half parsons in districts where conservative opinions prevailed; for though she was a philosophical radical, she was reverential in her turn of mind, and clung to poetical and consecrated sentiments, always laying more stress on woman's *duties* than on her *rights*.

The second of the Clerical series — "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" — is not so well told, nor is it so interesting as the first, besides being more after the fashion of ordinary stories. We miss in it the humor of good Mrs. Patten; nor are we drawn to the gin-and-water-drinking parson, although the description of

his early unfortunate love is done with a powerful hand. The story throughout is sad and painful.

The last of the series, "Janet's Repentance," is, I think, the best. The hero is again a clergyman, an evangelical, whose life is one long succession of protracted martyrdoms, — an expiation to atone for the desertion of a girl whom he had loved and ruined while in college. Here we see, for the first time in George Eliot's writings, that inexorable fate which pursues wrong-doing, and which so prominently stands out in all her novels. The singular thing is that she — at this time an advanced liberal — should have made the sinning young man, in the depth of his remorse, to find relief in that view of Christianity which is expounded by the Calvinists. But here she is faithful and true to the teaching of those by whom she was educated; and it is remarkable that her art enables her apparently to enter into the spiritual experiences of an evangelical curate with which she had no sympathy. She does not mock or deride, but seems to respect the religion which she had herself repudiated.

And the same truths which consoled the hard-working, self-denying curate are also made to redeem Janet herself, and secure for her a true repentance. This heroine of the story is the wife of a drunken, brutal village doctor, who dies of delirium tremens; she also

is the slave of the same degrading habit which destroys her husband, but, unlike him, is a victim of remorse and shame. In her despair she seeks advice and consolation from the minister whom she had ridiculed and despised; and through him she is led to seek that divine aid which alone enables a confirmed drunkard to conquer what by mere force of will is an unconquerable habit. And here George Eliot—for that is the name she now goes by—is in accord with the profound experience of many.

The whole tale, though short, is a triumph of art, and abounds with acute observations of human nature. It is a perfect picture of village life, with its gossip, its jealousies, its enmities, and its religious quarrels, showing on the part of the author an extraordinary knowledge of theological controversies and the religious movements of the early part of the nineteenth century. So vivid is her description of rural life, that the tale is really an historical painting, like the Dutch pictures of the seventeenth century, to be valued as an accurate delineation rather than a mere imaginary scene. Madonnas, saints, and such like pictures which fill the churches of Italy and Spain, works of the old masters, are now chiefly prized for their grace of form and richness of coloring,—exhibitions of ideal beauty, charming as creations, but not such as we see in real life; George Eliot's novels, on the contrary, are not works of

imagination, like the frescos in the Sistine Chapel, but copies of real life, like those of Wilkie and Teniers, which we value for their fidelity to Nature. And in regard to the passion of love, she does not portray it, as in the old-fashioned novels, leading to fortunate marriages with squires and baronets; but she generally dissects it, unravels it, and attempts to penetrate its mysteries, — a work decidedly more psychological than romantic or sentimental, and hence more interesting to scholars and thinkers than to ordinary readers, who delight in thrilling adventures and exciting narrations.

The "Scenes of Clerical Life" were followed the next year by "Adam Bede," which created a great impression on the cultivated mind of England and America. It did not create what is called a "sensation." I doubt if it was even popular with the generality of readers, nor was the sale rapid at first; but the critics saw that a new star of extraordinary brilliancy had arisen in the literary horizon. The unknown author entered, as she did in "Janet's Repentance," an entirely new field, with wonderful insight into the common life of uninteresting people, with a peculiar humor, great power of description, rare felicity of dialogue, and a deep undertone of serious and earnest reflection. And yet I confess, that when I first read "Adam Bede," twenty-five years ago, I was not much interested, and

I wondered why others were. It was not dramatic enough to excite me. Many parts of it were tedious. It seemed to me to be too much spun out, and its minuteness of detail wearied me. There was no great plot and no grand characters; nothing heroic, no rapidity of movement; nothing to keep me from laying the book down when the dinner-bell rang, or when the time came to go to bed. I did not then see the great artistic excellence of the book, and I did not care for a description of obscure people in the Midland Counties of England, — which, by the way, suggests a reason why "Adam Bede" cannot be appreciated by Americans as it is by the English people themselves, who every day see the characters described, and hear their dialect, and know their sorrows, and sympathize with their privations and labors. But after a closer and more critical study of the novel I have come to see merits that before escaped my eye. It is a study, a picture of humble English life, painted by the hand of a master, to be enjoyed most by people of critical discernment, and to be valued for its rare fidelity to Nature. It is of more true historical interest than many novels which are called historical, — even as the paintings of Rembrandt are more truly historical than those of Horace Vernet, since the former painted life as it really was in his day. Imaginative pictures are not those which are most prized by modern artists, or those

pictures which make every woman look like an angel and every man like a hero, — like those of Gainsborough or Reynolds, — however flattering they may be to those who pay for them.

I need not dwell on characters so well known as those painted in "Adam Bede." The hero is a painstaking, faithful journeyman carpenter, desirous of doing good work. Scotland and England abound in such men, and so did New England fifty years ago. This honest mechanic falls in love with a pretty but vain, empty, silly, selfish girl of his own class; but she had already fallen under the spell of the young squire of the village, — a good-natured fellow, of generous impulses, but essentially selfish and thoughtless, and utterly unable to cope with his duty. The carpenter, when he finds it out, gives vent to his wrath and jealousy, as is natural, and picks a quarrel with the squire and knocks him down, — an act of violence on the part of the inferior in rank not very common in England. The squire abandons his victim after ruining her character, — not an uncommon thing among young aristocrats, — and the girl strangely accepts the renewed attentions of her first lover, until the logic of events compels her to run away from home and become a vagrant. The tragic and interesting part of the novel is a vivid painting of the terrible sufferings of the ruined girl in her desolate wanderings, and of her trial for

abandoning her infant child to death, — the inexorable law of fate driving the sinner into the realms of darkness and shame. The story closes with the prosaic marriage of Adam Bede to Dinah Morris, — a Methodist preacher, who falls in love with him instead of his more pious brother Seth, who adores her. But the love of Adam and Dinah for one another is more spiritualized than is common, — is very beautiful, indeed, showing how love's divine elements can animate the human soul in all conditions of life. In the fervid spiritualism of Dinah's love for Adam we are reminded of a Saint Theresa seeking to be united with her divine spouse. Dinah is a religious rhapsodist, seeking wisdom and guidance in prayer; and the divine will is in accordance with her desires. "My soul," said she to Adam, "is so knit to yours that it is but a divided life if I live without you."

The most amusing and finely-drawn character in this novel is a secondary one, — Mrs. Poyser, — but painted with a vividness which Scott never excelled, and with a wealth of humor which Fielding never equalled. It is the wit and humor which George Eliot has presented in this inimitable character which make the book so attractive to the English, who enjoy these more than the Americans, — the latter delighting rather in what is grotesque and extravagant, like the elaborate absurdities of "Mark Twain." But this humor is more than that

of a shrewd and thrifty English farmer's wife; it belongs to human nature. We have seen such voluble sharp, sagacious, ironical, and worldly women among the farm-houses of New England, and heard them use language, when excited or indignant, equally idiomatic, though not particularly choice. Strike out the humor of this novel and the interest we are made to feel in commonplace people, and the story would not be a remarkable one.

"Adam Bede" was followed in a year by "The Mill on the Floss," the scene of which is also laid in a country village, where are some well-to-do people, mostly vulgar and uninteresting. This novel is to me more powerful than the one which preceded it, — having more faults, perhaps, but presenting more striking characters. As usual with George Eliot, her plot in this story is poor, involving improbable incidents and catastrophes. She is always unfortunate in her attempts to extricate her heroes and heroines from entangling difficulties. Invention is not her forte; she is weak when she departs from realistic figures. She is strongest in what she has seen, not in what she imagines; and here she is the opposite of Dickens, who paints from imagination. There was never such a man as Pickwick or Barnaby Rudge. Sir Walter Scott created characters, — like Jeannie Deans, — but they are as true to life as Sir John Falstaff.

Maggie Tulliver is the heroine of this story, in whose intellectual developments George Eliot painted herself, as Madame De Staël describes her own restless soul-agitations in "Delphine" and "Corinne." Nothing in fiction is more natural and life-like than the school-days of Maggie, when she goes fishing with her tyrannical brother, and when the two children quarrel and make up,—she, affectionate and yielding; he, fitful and overbearing. Many girls are tyrannized over by their brothers, who are often exacting, claiming the guardianship which belongs only to parents. But Maggie yields to her obstinate brother as well as to her unreasonable and vindictive father, governed by a sense of duty, until, with her rapid intellectual development and lofty aspiration, she breaks loose in a measure from their withering influence, though not from technical obligations. She almost loves Philip Wakem, the son of the lawyer who ruined her father; yet out of regard to family ties she refuses, while she does not yet repel, his love. But her real passion is for Stephen Gurst, who was betrothed to her cousin, and who returned Maggie's love with intense fervor.

> "Why did he love her? Curious fools, be still!
> Is human love the fruit of human will?"

She knows she ought not to love this man, yet she combats her passion with poor success, allows herself to

be compromised in her relations with him, and is only rescued by a supreme effort of self-renunciation, — a principle which runs through all George Eliot's novels, in which we see the doctrines of Buddha rather than those of Paul, although at times they seem to run into each other. Maggie erred in not closing the gate of her heart inexorably, and in not resisting the sway of a purely "physiological law." The vivid description of this sort of love, with its "strange agitations" and agonizing ecstasies, would have been denounced as immoral fifty years ago. The *dénouement* is an improbable catastrophe on a tidal river, in the rising floods of which Maggie and her brother are drowned, — a favorite way with the author in disposing of her heroes and heroines when she can no longer manage them.

The secondary characters of this novel are numerous, varied, and natural, and described with great felicity and humor. None of them are interesting people; in fact, most of them are very uninteresting, — vulgar, money-loving, material, purse-proud, selfish, such as are seen among those to whom money and worldly prosperity are everything, with no perception of what is lofty and disinterested, and on whom grand sentiments are lost, — yet kind-hearted in the main, and in the case of the Dobsons redeemed by a sort of family pride. The moral of the story is the usual one with George Eliot, — the conflict of duty with passion,

and the inexorable fate which pursues the sinner. She brings out the power of conscience as forcibly as Hawthorne has done in his "Scarlet Letter."

The "Mill on the Floss" was soon followed by "Silas Marner," regarded by some as the gem of George Eliot's novels, and which certainly — though pathetic and sad, as all her novels are — does not leave on the mind so mournful an impression, since in its outcome we see redemption. The principal character — the poor, neglected, forlorn weaver — emerges at length from the Everlasting Nay into the Everlasting Yea; and he emerges by the power of love, — love for a little child whom he has rescued from the snow, the storm, and death. Driven by injustice to a solitary life, to abject penury, to despair, the solitary miser, gloating over his gold pieces, — which he has saved by the hardest privation, and in which he trusts, — finds himself robbed, without redress or sympathy; but in the end he is consoled for his loss in the love he bestows on a helpless orphan, who returns it with the most noble disinterestedness, and lives to be his solace and his pride. Nothing more touching has ever been written by man or woman than this short story, as full of pathos as "Adam Bede" is full of humor.

What is remarkable in this story is that the plot is exactly similar to that of "Jermola the Potter," the

masterpiece of a famous Polish novelist, — a marvellous coincidence, or plagiarism, difficult to be explained. But Shakspeare, the most original of men, borrowed some of his plots from Italian writers; and Mirabeau appropriated the knowledge of men more learned than he, which by felicity of genius he made his own; and Webster, too, did the same thing. There is nothing new under the sun, except in the way of "putting things."

After the publication of the various novels pertaining to the rural and humble life of England, with which George Eliot was so well acquainted, into which she entered with so much sympathy, and which she so marvellously portrayed, she took a new departure, entering a field with which she was not so well acquainted, and of which she could only learn through books. The result was "Romola," the most ambitious, and in some respects the most remarkable, of all her works. It certainly is the most learned and elaborate. It is a philosophico-historical novel, the scene of which is laid in Florence at the time of Savonarola, — the period called the Renaissance, when art and literature were revived with great enthusiasm; a very interesting period, the glorious morning, as it were, of modern civilization.

This novel, the result of reading and reflection, necessarily called into exercise other faculties besides accu-

rate observation, — even imagination and invention, for which she is not pre-eminently distinguished. In this novel, though interesting and instructive, we miss the humor and simplicity of the earlier works. It is overloaded with learning. Not one intelligent reader in a hundred has ever heard even the names of many of the eminent men to whom she alludes. It is full of digressions, and of reflections on scientific theories. Many of the chapters are dry and pedantic. It is too philosophical to be popular, too learned to be appreciated. As in some of her other stories, highly improbable events take place. The plot is not felicitous, and the ending is unsatisfactory. The Italian critics of the book are not, on the whole, complimentary. George Eliot essayed to do, with prodigious labor, what she had no special aptitude for. Carlyle in ten sentences would have made a more graphic picture of Savonarola. None of her historical characters stand out with the vividness with which Scott represented Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, or with which even Bulwer painted Rienzi and the last of the Barons.

Critics do not admire historical novels, because they are neither history nor fiction. They mislead readers on important issues, and they are not so interesting as the masterpieces of Macaulay and Froude. Yet they have their uses. They give a superficial knowledge of great characters to those who will not read

history. The field of history is too vast for ordinary people, who have no time for extensive reading even if they have the inclination.

The great historical personage whom George Eliot paints in "Romola" is Savonarola,—and I think faithfully, on the whole. In the main she coincides with Villani, the greatest authority. In some respects I should take issue with her. She makes the religion of the Florentine reformer to harmonize with her notions of self-renunciation. She makes him preach the "religion of humanity," which was certainly not taught in his day. He preached duty, indeed, and appealed to conscience; but he preached duty to God rather than to man. The majesty of a personal God, fearful in judgment and as represented by the old Jewish prophets, was the great idea of Savonarola's theology. His formula was something like this: "Punishment for sin is a divine judgment, not the effect of inexorable laws. Repentance is a necessity. Unless men repent of their sins, God will punish them. Unless Italy repents, it will be desolated by His vengeance." Catholic theology, which he never departed from, has ever recognized the supreme allegiance of man to his Maker, because *He* demands it. Even among the Jesuits, with their corrupted theology, the motto emblazoned on their standard was, *Ad majorem dei gloriam.* But the great Dominican preacher is

made by George Eliot to be "the spokesman of humanity made divine, not of Deity made human." "Make your marriage vows," said he to Romola, "an offering to the great work by which sin and sorrow are made to cease."

But Savonarola is only a secondary character in the novel. He might as well have been left out altogether. The real hero and heroine are Romola and Tito; and they are identified with the life of the period, which is the Renaissance, — a movement more Pagan than Christian. These two characters may be called creations. Romola is an Italian woman, supposed to represent a learned and noble lady four hundred years ago. She has lofty purposes and aspirations; she is imbued with the philosophy of self-renunciation; her life is devoted to others, — first to her father, and then to humanity. But she is as cold as marble; she is the very reverse of Corinne. Even her love for Tito is made to vanish away on the first detection of his insincerity, although he is her husband. She becomes as hard and implacable as fate; and when she ceases to love her husband, she hates him and leaves him, and is only brought back by a sense of duty. Yet her hatred is incurable; and in her wretched disappointment she finds consolation only in a sort of stoicism. How far George Eliot's notions of immortality are brought out in the spiritual experiences of Romola I do not

know; but the immortality of Romola is not that which is brought to light by the gospel: it is a vague and indefinite sentiment kindred to that of Indian sages, — that we live hereafter only in our teachings or deeds; that we are absorbed in the universal whole; that our immortality is the living in the hearts and minds of men, not personally hereafter among the redeemed. To quote her own fine thought, —

> "Oh, may I join the choir invisible
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end in self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And, with their mild persistence, urge man's search
> To vaster issues!"

Tito is a more natural character, good-natured, kind-hearted, with generous impulses. He is interesting in spite of his faults; he is accomplished, versatile, and brilliant. But he is inherently selfish, and has no moral courage. He gradually, in his egotism, becomes utterly false and treacherous, though not an ordinary villain. He is the creature of circumstances. His weakness leads to falsehood, and falsehood ends in crime; which crime pursues him with unrelenting vengeance, — not the agonies of remorse, for he has no conscience, but the vindictive and persevering hatred of his foster father, whom he robbed. The vengeance of Baldassare is almost preternatural; it surpasses the

wrath of Achilles and the malignity of Shylock. It is the wrath of a demon, from which there is no escape; it would be tragical if the subject of it were greater. Though Tito perishes in an improbable way, he is yet the victim of the inexorable law of human souls.

But if "Romola" has faults, it has remarkable excellences. In this book George Eliot aspires to be a teacher of ethics and philosophy. She is not humorous, but intensely serious and thoughtful. She sometimes discourses like Epictetus:—

"And so, my Lillo," says she at the conclusion, "if you mean to act nobly, and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of man, you must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it. And remember, if you were to choose something lower, and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same; and it would be a calamity falling on a base mind,— which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it, and that may well make a man say, 'It would have been better for me if I had never been born.'"

Three years elapsed between the publication of "Romola" and that of "Felix Holt," which shows to what a strain the mind of George Eliot had been subjected in elaborating an historical novel. She now returns to her own peculiar field, in which her great successes had been made, and with which she was familiar; and yet

even in her own field we miss now the genial humanity and inimitable humor of her earlier novels. In "Felix Holt" she deals with social and political problems in regard to which there is great difference of opinion; for the difficult questions of political economy have not yet been solved. Felix Holt is a political economist, but not a vulgar radical filled with discontent and envy. He is a mechanic, tolerably educated, and able to converse with intelligence on the projected reforms of the day, in cultivated language. He is high-minded and conscientious, but unpractical, and gets himself into difficulties, escaping penal servitude almost by miracle, for the crime of homicide. The heroine, Esther Lyon, is supposed to be the daughter of a Dissenting minister, who talks theology after the fashion of the divines of the seventeenth century; unknown to herself, however, she is really the daughter of the heir of large estates, and ultimately becomes acknowledged as such, but gives up wealth and social position to marry Felix Holt, who had made a vow of perpetual poverty. Such a self-renunciation is not common in England. Even a Paula would hardly have accepted such a lot; only one inspired with the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius would be capable of such a willing sacrifice, — very noble, but very improbable.

The most powerful part of the story is the description of the remorse which so often accompanies an illicit

ove, as painted in the proud, stately, stern, unbending, aristocratic Mrs. Transome. "Though youth has faded, and joy is dead, and love has turned to loathing, yet memory, like a relentless fury, pursues the gray-haired woman who hides within her breast a heavy load of shame and dread." Illicit love is a common subject with George Eliot; and it is always represented as a mistake or crime, followed by a terrible retribution, sooner or later, — if not outwardly, at least inwardly, in the sorrows of a wounded and heavy-laden soul.

No one of George Eliot's novels opens more beautifully than "Felix Holt," though there is the usual disappointment of readers with the close. And probably no description of a rural district in the Midland Counties fifty years ago has ever been painted which equals in graphic power the opening chapter. The old coach turnpike, the roadside inns brilliant with polished tankards, the pretty bar-maids, the repartees of jocose ostlers, the mail-coach announced by the many blasts of the bugle, the green willows of the water-courses, the patient cart-horses, the full-uddered cows, the rich pastures, the picturesque milkmaids, the shepherd with his slouching walk, the laborer with his bread and bacon, the tidy kitchen-garden, the golden corn-ricks, the bushy hedgerows bright with the blossoms of the wild convolvulus, the comfortable parsonage, the old parish church with its ivy-mantled towers, the thatched

cottage with double daisies and geraniums in the window-seats, — these and other details bring before our minds a rural glory which has passed away before the power of steam, and may never again return.

"Felix Holt" was published in 1866, and it was five years before "Middlemarch" appeared, — a very long novel, thought by some to be the best which George Eliot has written; read fifteen times, it is said, by the Prince of Wales. In this novel the author seems to have been ambitious to sustain her fame. She did not, like Trollope, dash off three novels a year, and all alike. She did not write mechanically, as a person grinds at a mill. Nor was she greedy of money, to be spent in running races with the rich. She was a conscientious writer from first to last. Yet "Middlemarch," with all the labor spent upon it, has more faults than any of her preceding novels. It is as long as "The History of Sir Charles Grandison;" it has a miserable plot; it has many tedious chapters, and too many figures, and too much theorizing on social science. Rather than a story, it is a panorama of the doctors and clergymen and lawyers and business people who live in a provincial town, with their various prejudices and passions and avocations. It is not a cheerful picture of human life. We are brought to see an unusual number of misers, harpies, quacks, cheats, and hypocrites. There

are but few interesting characters in it: Dorothea is the most so, — a very noble woman, but romantic, and making great mistakes. She desires to make herself useful to somebody, and marries a narrow, jealous, aristocratic pedant, who had spent his life in elaborate studies on a dry and worthless subject. Of course, she awakes from her delusion when she discovers what a small man, with great pretensions, her learned husband is; but she remains in her dreariness of soul a generous, virtuous, and dutiful woman. She does not desert her husband because she does not love him, or because he is uncongenial, but continues faithful to the end. Like Maggie Tulliver and Romola, she has lofty aspirations, but marries, after her husband's death, a versatile, brilliant, shallow Bohemian, as ill fitted for her serious nature as the dreary Casaubon himself.

Nor are we brought in sympathy with Lydgate, the fashionable doctor with grand aims, since he allows his whole scientific aspirations to be defeated by a selfish and extravagant wife. Rosamond Vincy is, however, one of the best drawn characters in fiction, such as we often see, — pretty, accomplished, clever, but incapable of making a sacrifice, secretly thwarting her husband, full of wretched complaints, utterly insincere, attractive perhaps to men, but despised by women. Caleb Garth is a second Adam Bede; and Mrs. Cadwallader, the aristocratic wife of the rector, is a second Mrs. Poyser

in the glibness of her tongue and in the thriftiness of her ways. Mr. Bullstrode, the rich banker, is a character we unfortunately sometimes find in a large country town, — a man of varied charities, a pillar of the Church, but as full of cant as an egg is of meat; in fact, a hypocrite and a villain, ultimately exposed and punished.

The general impression left on the mind from reading "Middlemarch" is sad and discouraging. In it is brought out the blended stoicism, humanitarianism, Buddhism, and agnosticism of the author. She paints the "struggle of noble natures, struggling vainly against the currents of a poor kind of world, without trust in an invisible Rock higher than themselves to which they could entreat to be lifted up."

In another five years George Eliot produced "Daniel Deronda," the last and most unsatisfactory of her great novels, written in feeble health and with exhausted nervous energies, as she was passing through the shadows of the evening of her life. In this work she doubtless essayed to do her best; but she could not always surpass herself, any more than could Scott or Dickens. Nor is she to be judged by those productions which reveal her failing strength, but by those which were written in the fresh enthusiasm of a lofty soul. No one thinks the less of Milton because the "Paradise Regained" is not equal to the "Paradise

Lost." Many are the immortal poets who are now known only for two or three of their minor poems. It takes a Michael Angelo to paint his grandest frescos after reaching eighty years of age; or a Gladstone, to make his best speeches when past the age of seventy. Only people with a wonderful physique and unwasted mental forces can go on from conquering to conquer, — people, moreover, who have reserved their strength, and lived temperate and active lives.

Although "Daniel Deronda" is occasionally brilliant, and laboriously elaborated, still it is regarded generally by the critics as a failure. The long digression on the Jews is not artistic; and the subject itself is uninteresting, especially to the English, who have inveterate prejudices against the chosen people. The Hebrews, as they choose to call themselves, are doubtless a remarkable people, and have marvellously preserved their traditions and their customs. Some among them have arisen to the foremost rank in scholarship, statesmanship, and finance. They have entered, at different times, most of the cabinets of Europe, and have held important chairs in its greatest universities. But it was a Utopian dream that sent Daniel Deronda to the Orient to collect together the scattered members of his race. Nor are enthusiasts and proselytes often found among the Jews. We see talent, but not visionary dreamers To the English they appear as peculiarly

practical, — bent on making money, sensual in their pleasures, and only distinguished from the people around them by an extravagant love of jewelry and a proud and cynical rationalism. Yet in justice it must be confessed, that some of the most interesting people in the world are Jews.

In "Daniel Deronda" the cheerless philosophy of George Eliot is fully brought out. Mordecai, in his obscure and humble life, is a good representative of a patient sufferer, but "in his views and aspirations is a sort of Jewish Mazzini." The hero of the story is Mordecai's disciple, who has discovered his Hebrew origin, of which he is as proud as his aristocratic mother is ashamed. The heroine is a spoiled woman of fashion, who makes the usual mistake of most of George Eliot's heroines, in violating conscience and duty. She marries a man whom she knows to be inherently depraved and selfish; marries him for his money, and pays the usual penalty, — a life of silent wretchedness and secret sorrow and unavailing regret. But she is at last fortunately delivered by the accidental death of her detested husband, — by drowning, of course. Remorse in seeing her murderous wishes accomplished — though not by her own hand, but by pursuing fate — awakens a new life in her soul, and she is redeemed amid the throes of anguish and conscious guilt.

"Theophrastus Such," the last work of George Eliot, is not a novel, but a series of character sketches, full of unusual bitterness and withering sarcasm. Thackeray never wrote anything so severe. It is one of the most cynical books ever written by man or woman. There is as much difference in tone and spirit between it and "Adam Bede," as between "Proverbs" and "Ecclesiastes;" as between "Sartor Resartus" and the "Latter-Day Pamphlets." And this difference is not more marked than the difference in style and language between this and her earlier novels. Critics have been unanimous in their admiration of the author's style in "Silas Marner" and "The Mill on the Floss,"—so clear, direct, simple, natural; as faultless as Swift, Addison, and Goldsmith, those great masters of English prose, whose fame rests as much on their style as on their thoughts. In "Theophrastus Such," on the contrary, as in some parts of "Daniel Deronda," the sentences are long, involved, and often almost unintelligible.

In presenting the works of George Eliot, I have confined myself to her prose productions, since she is chiefly known by her novels. But she wrote poetry also, and some critics have seen considerable merit in it. Yet whatever merit it may have I must pass without notice. I turn from the criticism of her novels, as they successively appeared, to allude briefly to her

closing days. Her health began to fail when she was writing "Middlemarch," doubtless from her intense and continual studies, which were a severe strain on her nervous system. It would seem that she led a secluded life, rarely paying visits, but receiving at her house distinguished literary and scientific men. She was fond of travelling on the Continent, and of making short visits to the country. In conversation she is said to have been witty, tolerant, and sympathetic. Poetry, music, and art absorbed much of her attention. She read very little contemporaneous fiction, and seldom any criticisms on her own productions. For an unbeliever in historical Christianity, she had great reverence for all earnest Christian peculiarities, from Roman Catholic asceticism to Methodist fervor. In her own belief she came nearest to the positivism of Comte, although he was not so great an oracle to her as he was to Mr. Lewes, with whom twenty years were passed by her in congenial studies and labors. They were generally seen together at the opening night of a new play or the début of a famous singer or actor, and sometimes, within a limited circle, they attended a social or literary reunion.

In 1878 George Eliot lost the companion of her literary life. And yet two years afterward — at the age of fifty-nine — she surprised her friends by marrying John Walter Cross, a man much younger than herself. No

one can fathom that mystery. But Mrs. Cross did not long enjoy the felicities of married life. In six months from her marriage, after a pleasant trip to the Continent, she took cold in attending a Sunday concert in London; and on the 22d of December, 1880, she passed away from earth to join her "choir invisible," whose thoughts have enriched the world.

It is not extravagant to say that George Eliot left no living competitor equal to herself in the realm of fiction. I do not myself regard her as great a novelist as Scott or Thackeray; but critics generally place her second only to those great masters in this department of literature. How long her fame will last, who can tell? Admirers and rhetoricians say, "as long as the language in which her books are written." She doubtless will live as long as any English novelist; but do those who amuse live like those who save? Will the witty sayings of Dickens be cherished like the almost inspired truths of Plato, of Bacon, of Burke? Nor is popularity a sure test of posthumous renown.

The question for us to settle is, not whether George Eliot as a writer is immortal, but whether she has rendered services that her country and mankind will value. She has undoubtedly added to the richness of English literature. She has deeply interested and instructed her generation. Thousands, and hundreds of thousands, owe to her a debt of gratitude for the enjoy-

ment she has afforded them. How many an idle hour has she not beguiled! How many have felt the artistic delight she has given them, like those who have painted beautiful pictures! As already remarked, we read her descriptions of rural character and life as we survey the masterpieces of Hogarth and Wilkie.

It is for her delineation of character, and for profound psychological analysis, that her writings have permanent value. She is a faithful copyist of Nature. She recalls to our minds characters whom everybody of large experience has seen in his own village or town, — the conscientious clergyman, and the minister who preaches like a lecturer; the angel who lifts up, and the sorceress who pulls down. We recall the misers we have scorned, and the hypocrites whom we have detested. We see on her canvas the vulgar rich and the struggling poor, the pompous man of success and the broken-down man of misfortune; philanthropists and drunkards, lofty heroines and silly butterflies, benevolent doctors and smiling politicians, quacks and scoundrels and fools, mixed up with noble men and women whose aspirations are for a higher life; people of kind impulses and weak wills, of attractive personal beauty with meanness of mind and soul. We do not find exaggerated monsters of vice, or faultless models of virtue and wisdom: we see such people as live in every Christian community. True it is that the impression we receive

of human life is not always pleasant; but who in any community can bear the severest scrutiny of neighbors? It is this fidelity to our poor humanity which tinges the novels of George Eliot with so deep a gloom.

But the sadness which creeps over us in view of human imperfection is nothing to that darkness which enters the soul when the peculiar philosophical or theological opinions of this gifted woman are insidiously but powerfully introduced. However great she was as a delineator of character, she is not an oracle as a moral teacher. She was steeped in the doctrines of modern agnosticism. She did not believe in a personal God, nor in His superintending providence, nor in immortality as brought to light in the gospel. There are some who do not accept historical Christianity, but are pervaded with its spirit. Even Carlyle, when he cast aside the miracles of Christ and his apostles as the honest delusions of their followers, was almost a Calvinist in his recognition of God as a sovereign power; and he abhorred the dreary materialism of Comte and Mill as much as he detested the shallow atheism of Diderot and Helvetius. But George Eliot went beyond Carlyle in disbelief. At times, especially in her poetry, she writes almost like a follower of Buddha. The individual soul is absorbed in the universal whole; future life has no certainty; hope in redemption is buried in a sepulchre; life in most cases is a futile struggle;

the great problems of existence are invested with gloom as well as mystery. Thus she discourses like a Pagan. She would have us to believe that Theocritus was wiser than Pascal; that Marcus Aurelius was as good as Saint Paul.

Hence, as a teacher of morals and philosophy George Eliot is not of much account. We question the richness of any moral wisdom which is not in harmony with the truths that Christian people regard as fundamental, and which they believe will save the world. In some respects she has taught important lessons. She has illustrated the power of conscience and the sacredness of duty. She was a great preacher of the doctrine that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." She showed that those who do not check and control the first departure from virtue will, in nine cases out of ten, hopelessly fall.

These are great certitudes. But there are others which console and encourage as well as intimidate. The *Te Domine Speravi* of the dying Xavier on the desolate island of Sancian, pierced through the clouds of dreary blackness which enveloped the nations he sought to save. Christianity is full of promises of exultant joy, and its firmest believers are those whose lives are gilded with its divine radiance. Surely, it is not intellectual or religious narrowness which causes us to regret that so gifted a woman as George Eliot — so

justly regarded as one of the greatest ornaments of modern literature — should have drifted away from the Rock which has resisted the storms and tempests of nearly two thousand years, and abandoned, if she did not scorn, the faith which has animated the great masters of thought from Augustine to Bossuet. "The stern mournfulness which is produced by most of her novels gives us the idea of one who does not know, or who has forgotten, that the stone was rolled away from the heart of the world on the morning when Christ arose from the tomb."

AUTHORITIES.

Miss Blind's Life of George Eliot. Mr. Cross's Life of George Eliot, I regret to say, did not reach me until after the foregoing pages had gone to press. But as this lecture is criticism rather than history, the few additional facts that might have been gained would not be important; while, after tracing in that *quasi* autobiography the development of her mental and moral nature, I see no reason to change my conclusions based on the outward facts of her life and on her works. The Nineteenth Century, ix.; London Quarterly Review, lvii. 40; Contemporary Review, xx. 29, 39; The National Review, xxxi. 23, 16; Blackwood's Magazine, cxxix. 85–100, 112, 116, 103; Edinburgh Review, cx. 144, 124, 137, 150; Westminster Review, lxxi. 110, lxxxvi. 74, 80, 90, 112; Dublin Review, xlvii. 88, 89; Cornhill Magazine, xlii.; Atlantic Monthly, xxxviii. 18; Fortnightly Review, xxvi. 19; British Quarterly Review, lxiv. 57, 48, 45; International Review, iv. 10; Temple Bar Magazine, 49; Littell's Living Age, cxlviii.; The North American Review, ciii. 116, 107; Quarterly Review, cxxxiv. 108; Macmillan's Magazine, iii. 4; North British Review, xlv.

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